THE TREASURES OF THE ROSARY

FATHER McKENNA, O.P.

ST. ALBERT'S COLLEGE LIBRARY

THE TREASURES OF THE ROSARY

BY

THE VERY REV. CHARLES HYACINTH McKENNA
PREACHER GENERAL OF THE ORDER OF PREACHERS

INTRODUCTION BY

HIS EMINENCE JAMES CARDINAL GIBBONS
ARCHBISHOP OF BALTIMORE

P. J. KENEDY & SONS
Printers to the Holy Apostolic See
44 BARCLAY STREET, NEW YORK

Nihil obstat

Fr. GREGORIUS FITZGERALD, O.P., S.T., Lr.

Fr. JOANNES McNICHOLAS, O.P., S.T., Lr.

Imprimatur

Fr. MATTHÆUS LEO HEAGEN, O.P., S.T., Lr.
Prior Provincialis.

Nihil obstat

REMIGIUS LAFORT, S.T.L.
Censor.

Imprimatur

✠ JOHN CARDINAL FARLEY,
Archbishop of New York.

Copyright, 1913, by P. J. KENEDY & SONS

TO

Mary

OUR IMMACULATE MOTHER

QUEEN OF THE

MOST HOLY ROSARY

ST. ALBERT'S COLLEGE LIBRARY

FOREWORD

It is a long-established custom on missions conducted by the Dominican Fathers to give each evening a short instruction on the Rosary previous to reciting the beads, which are always said in common before the night sermon. This instruction has a two-fold object: to make known to the faithful the origin and efficacy of this great devotion, so dear to the heart of our immaculate Mother, and to inspire them with greater fervor, devotion and confidence in reciting the Rosary. For many years it was the privilege of the writer of this humble book to give those Rosary talks. No longer able to engage in mission work, some of his esteemed friends in the priesthood have urged him to prepare a course of Rosary talks for the press, in the belief that they would not only be useful to Directors of Rosary Societies, but would also be an aid to the faithful in meditating on the mysteries of our Mother's cherished Rosary.

Another motive prompted the writer to prepare these considerations for the press. He feels strongly urged to remind both priest and people

of a sacred duty which they owe to God, to themselves, and to their neighbor. During his mission life he often contrasted the present leniency of priests to penitents with the rigor manifested by the early Church in giving canonical penances to her erring children. Yet we know she has not changed her doctrine, nor has God changed in His justice, nor has sin lost its malice. There is, however, a marked change in the Church's discipline. She has considered our weakness, and our unwillingness to perform public penances; and, mindful of the wonderful power bestowed on her through the keys given to her first Visible Head, St. Peter, and through him to his successors, she opens to us the infinite treasures of the merits of Christ and of His saints, and urges us to gain through them indulgences to satisfy the debt due divine justice for our sins. Yet, when we give our light sacramental penances to our people, often in *re gravi*, do we urge them to supply for our leniency by gaining indulgences? Do we ourselves appreciate as we should the necessity of gaining indulgences, and of aiding poor sufferers whom the law of charity binds us to assist?

In an Appendix to the present work, will be found a treatise on indulgences, with a list of those which all the faithful may easily gain. We earnestly recommend its perusal to the devout reader.

St. Alphonsus would have priests always labor for God and for souls—during life by their

active ministry, after death by their writings. Soon to lay down the sweet labor of life, this book is lovingly placed by the writer at Mary's feet, and he asks her to accept its dedication, to protect its readers and to pray for himself now and at the hour of his death.

INTRODUCTION

Father McKenna has indeed conferred a real benefit on the English-speaking Catholic world by this book of devout reflections on the mysteries and treasures of the Rosary. Great multitudes, both of the clergy and the laity, will sincerely rejoice that he has left to them in permanent form something of those inspired thoughts and words that have been instrumental during his long and fruitful life in directing so many thousands into the ways of holiness and salvation.

For centuries, in the Church of God,—ever since the time of the great St. Dominic,—the Rosary has been one of the chiefest means of Catholic devotion. Few prayers have become so widespread among the faithful. The popularity of the Rosary is due alike to its simplicity, which makes it suited to the capacity of all classes, and to the sublime character of the prayers and meditations which it embraces and excites. All can say the Rosary—rich and poor, learned and unlearned, young and old. And no prayers assuredly could be better accommodated to the

needs of a Christian life and Christian perfection than those of which it is composed. The Our Father and Hail Mary, the mysteries of our Saviour's life and death: His infancy and youth, His trials, sorrows, sufferings, and triumphs,—what subjects of thought can be more conducive to Christian elevation and highest perfection than these! But not only is the Rosary, by reason of its lofty prayers and meditations, a powerful help to spiritual life and progress; it is also a very special means of expiation. Most richly has it been endowed with indulgences both for the living and the dead. And thus it is that the proper exercise of this great devotion, while making for personal sanctification through the use of sweetest prayers and holiest reflections, is likewise designed to clear away the temporal effects of sin and prepare the soul for its supreme beatitude.

Heartily, then, will Catholics of all classes welcome this volume of Father McKenna's, in which the Rosary, with its history, mysteries, and treasures, is clearly and beautifully set before us. Thoughtful use of the book will doubtless make the Rosary better known and better appreciated, and will thereby contribute not a little to a fuller knowledge and a more ardent love of the ever blessed Mother of our Saviour, the Queen of the Rosary and our advocate with God.

JAMES CARDINAL GIBBONS,
Archbishop of Baltimore.

CONTENTS

PAGE

Foreword 5
Introduction 9
Prayer an Essential to Christian Perfection 13
The Rosary 22
The Power of the Rosary 36
The Our Father 43
The Hail Mary 54
Holy Mary, Mother of God, Pray for us Sinners 66
The Annunciation 81
The Visitation 93
The Nativity 105
The Presentation 114
The Finding of Our Lord in the Temple 125
The Agony of Our Lord in the Garden 139
The Scourging 150
The Crowning with Thorns 163
The Carrying of the Cross 173
The Crucifixion and Death of Our Lord 183
The Resurrection 193

PAGE

The Ascension of Our Lord into Heaven 208

The Descent of the Holy Ghost 218

The Assumption 229

The Coronation of the Blessed Virgin 238

The Salve Regina 251

Indulgences 260

Confraternity of the Rosary 267

THE TREASURES OF THE ROSARY

PRAYER AN ESSENTIAL TO CHRISTIAN PERFECTION

Our faith teaches us that we are the children of a fallen race. Constituted in innocence and perfection, our first parents lost by disobedience those precious gifts and brought misery and death on their offspring. Though mental and moral diseases are transmitted to us through the sin of Adam, yet man is not totally depraved. He still possesses much of his former nobility; he still aspires to that exalted state whence he fell.

Among the aspirations of man's soul, the highest and holiest is to become perfect, to be again intimately united with God. Nor does God condemn this sublime longing for perfection. On the contrary, He inspires and fosters it, and even said of old to the father of the faithful: "Walk before Me, and be perfect." [1] It was to enable us to attain this perfection that

[1] Gen. xvii. 1.

He sent on earth His adorable Son, who gave us the example of a most perfect life, and at the same time furnished us with all the means necessary to attain it. He calls upon us to be perfect because our Father in heaven is perfect.[1] He would teach us that, though our nature is fallen, our flesh corrupted by original sin, thus transmitted through generation after generation of the sons of Adam, man is still capable of being purified by grace and elevated to the highest dignity. He would say: "I have taken that flesh to Myself, free from the poison of sin, pure as it was found in My immaculate Mother. This same flesh I will communicate to you through the Blessed Eucharist, the Sacrament of My love. Through it you will attain a higher life, and thus be united with My divinity." Again, He would say: "Your father, Adam, was clothed with the royal robe of human flesh, but instead of carrying it with honor and preserving it unsullied, he ignobly fell. He defiled his humanity, and transmitted its corruption to his offspring. I have assumed that same flesh of Adam, but without its sinfulness. I have walked before you in that royal robe to teach you to imitate Me." "Walk before Me and be perfect." Was not this also the meaning of St. Paul when he said: "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ; for this is the will of God, your sanctification"? Through Christ, the flesh of Adam, far from becoming a hindrance, will

[1] Matt. v. 48.

rather assist us in our noble striving for perfection.

That God wills our sanctification is an article of our faith. Where is the loving parent who wishes to see his child deformed or unshapely? Where the painter or sculptor who wishes his masterpiece defiled or disfigured by an enemy? Parents would fain array their children in richest and fairest garments; they lament when their poverty prevents the accomplishment of their hearts' desires. O my Father and my God! how ardently You desire Your children to be clothed in robes of whitest purity and decorated with the precious ornaments of grace! Nor is there any fear that thereby Your celestial treasury will become exhausted. The more we ask, the more our heavenly Father is delighted to bestow.

Aspirations for a higher life were not confined to the followers of Christ, for even pagan peoples in multiplying their idols sought to render themselves more pleasing to their gods. For this they offered sacrifices, for this they afflicted themselves, subjecting their bodies to fearful privations and sufferings. Among enlightened Gentiles, we find holy Job lamenting his defilements and asking of God, "Who can make him clean that is conceived of unclean seed? is it not Thou who only art?"[1] King of God's chosen people, how ardently David sighed for perfection, even as the stag pants for the fountain[2] of living water! How fervently the prophets

[1] Job xiv. 4. [2] Ps. xli. 2.

desired the coming of the Messiah, calling on the heavens to rain down the Just One,[1] who would break the chains of sin and enable them to see the face of God! But it is especially among the followers of Christ that we see the desire for spiritual perfection manifested in all its genuine earnestness and intensity. The deserts of Asia and Africa bloomed with the brightest flowers of Christian virtue. Then were the praises of God chanted by countless thousands of chastened souls, who led lives of fearful mortification in order to attain a close union with their Creator. These cenobites were followed by vast armies of noble martyrs who, with Ignatius and Polycarp, rejoiced that the teeth of wild beasts, the rack, the gridiron, or the executioner's sword would hasten the end of their earthly pilgrimage and conduct them to the God of their hearts. Nor has this holy ardor been chilled by the frigid atmosphere of the Twentieth Century. This age, that seems to thirst only for gold and sensual gratifications, is nevertheless peopling our convents and monasteries with noble souls who emulate the zeal of the ancient cenobites and martyrs. Year after year, countless thousands of the purest and best sons and daughters of our time, prostrate before God's altar, consecrate body and soul to His divine service, all proclaiming, as in seraphic chorus, the heart's desire for Christian perfection, as well as the soul's aspiration for union with its God.

[1] Isaias xlv. 8.

One of the heretical teachings of Martin Luther was that it is impossible for man to keep God's commandments, thereby likening the Almighty to the tyrannical Pharao, who commanded the Israelites to make bricks whilst he refused them the means whereby to produce them. When God commands us to love Him with our whole heart and soul and mind and strength, and to keep ourselves unsullied by sin, He offers us all the necessary means to accomplish His will. We read of St. Francis of Assisi that when he gave his Rule to his Order, many of the members complained that the Rule demanded too much of human nature. The great patriarch made known their complaint to his Blessed Master, who replied that the Rule must stand unchanged: "Let the members do their part, and I shall enable them to accomplish what is difficult." So our heavenly Father, in giving His commands, and His adorable Son, in bidding us to be perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect,[1] are prepared to furnish to all men the necessary means to attain the highest sanctity of their respective states. Among these means, two especially are offered to us—prayer and the Sacraments. The first is presented to all, whether Jew or Gentile, whether Protestant or Catholic. The second, all can attain who desire membership in the mystical Body of Christ. These two mighty channels of grace, always flowing from the throne of God, are capable of elevating our

[1] Matt. v. 48.

souls to that sublime state to which God is ever calling us. But it is to prayer, as a powerful means of sanctification, that I now desire to direct your especial attention.

Volumes have been written by great theologians, especially by St. Augustine and St. Gregory in early days, and later by St. Thomas Aquinas, St. John of the Cross, St. Teresa and St. Alphonsus Liguori, on the necessity and power of prayer. These holy writers show us that the lack of prayer was the origin of all sin and misery from the beginning. The angels were created free agents, to love or to hate God, to obey or to disobey Him. Had all those bright spirits in their hour of probation asked their Creator to confirm them in His grace, Lucifer and his companions would never have fallen. Had our first parents asked for strength to resist temptation, they never would have yielded to that arch-enemy; and from the days of Eden until the present not a single soul descends into the eternal torments of hell but at the Day of Judgment must acknowledge: "I fell into sin because I did not ask my God for help and strength in the time of temptation." Why, it may be asked, is this man a drunkard: why, that a blasphemer: why, a third consumed with impurity? Why is that fallen girl a disgrace to her sex? Ah, it is not that God wishes them to be such; He never willed that they should be so vilely degraded. He provided all that was necessary for their sanctification, but they refused to seek

or to make use of the means He mercifully extended to them. They can, each and all, cry out with the prophet of old: "Destruction is thine own, O Israel." [1]

It was His knowledge of the power and necessity of prayer that caused our Blessed Lord to give us the example and command to pray fervently, frequently and perseveringly. In the silent sanctuary of his Blessed Mother's womb, in the first moment that saw His soul united with the Divinity, His prayer went up to His heavenly Father. Then there arose a sacrifice of prayer, of praise and adoration, from the heart of Mary's Son infinitely more acceptable to heaven than all the glory and worship that had ever been given the Almighty by the countless legions of His angels. Then, too, ardent petitions went forth for our fallen race, for whom Jesus offered Himself as Advocate and Redeemer. Thenceforward, during His whole life, He was a man of prayer. Whether in the workshop with Joseph, or in the desert alone with His heavenly Father, or in the midst of His career of teaching and miracles, up to His expiration on the cross, the heart of our Redeemer was ever united in prayer and adoration with His heavenly Father. And now, at this moment, whether He reposes in the Blessed Sacrament on the altars of the world or is seated on His throne of glory at the right hand of His Father, He is ever making intercession for us, that we

[1] Osee xiii. 9.

may walk in His footsteps and share one day with Him in the glory of His kingdom.[1]

Three motives continually urge us to pray: our dependence on God, our subjection to temptation, and our state of imperfection. Every moment we need the help of the Omnipotent to sustain us. His power is as much required for our constant support as it was to create the world. The air we breathe, the food we eat, the water we drink, all demand an acknowledgment of His providence. The beasts of the field minister to our wants; the earth, from her fecund bosom, pours forth fruits and flowers at our feet. All creation cries out to us: "O man! thou art our high priest! At the command of the Most High God, we minister to thee that, as our head and chief, thou mayest offer to Him, in thy name and ours the homage of humble prayer and adoration!" Each day we are tempted, realizing the word spoken by St. Peter, "your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion goeth about seeking whom he may devour."[2] Our great defense is prayer; and none can be conquered who nobly implore heaven's aid in the time of temptation. Nay, God permits our temptations to compel us to have recourse to Him in prayer. Again, we must pray in order to attain the perfection to which we are called. God does not give us at our birth, or at our baptism, all the graces He intends for us. He has immense treasures for each of His children,

[1] Rom. viii. 34. [2] 1 Peter v. 8.

but He requires that they ask for those treasures through fervent prayer. Even as the parent does not give his child in infancy all the gifts intended for it, but desires that each day the little one make known its wants, so God wishes that we daily make known our necessities to Him, thereby recognizing our entire dependence on His bounty, and at the same time paying to Him the homage of prayer. It was by this means that His chosen servants attained their high state of perfection. They found that prayer was the key that opened heaven's precious treasury. In communing with their Creator they enjoyed a sweetness and a delight that surpassed all earthly treasures. Hence it was that so many sought the solitude of deserts and cloisters, that in silence and alone with God they might pour forth their souls in uninterrupted prayer. We may not be called to retire from the world or to hide ourselves in the wilderness with the early cenobites, yet we require prayer as much as they did. We have our own battles to fight, our enemies to conquer, our perfection to gain. Let us then be thoroughly earnest in this pious exercise, and especially in the use of that form of prayer, the holy Rosary, revealed to us by our Blessed Mother, and handed down to us by St. Dominic and the saints. In the devout and faithful use of our beads we shall discover one of the most powerful means of elevating our souls to God and of enriching them with the choicest gifts of heaven.

THE ROSARY

To you it is given to know the mystery of the Kingdom of God.—Luke viii. 10.

THESE words of Our Lord were primarily addressed to His disciples, but they are applicable to His followers in all ages. Whether we consider them as implying the Christian's obligation of seeking a knowledge of the sacred mysteries of religion, or as words of congratulation to His Apostles, because they possess that knowledge, we know that it is our duty to study the mysteries of our Faith and to make them the subject of frequent meditation. In a great measure, the mysteries of divine Faith are contained in that beautiful devotion, the Rosary, which, according to tradition, was revealed to St. Dominic by the Mother of God.

In this method of prayer we find the principal truths of our holy religion set forth in a form so simple, so intelligible, that even a child can profitably grasp their meaning; and yet they present subjects so sublime as to transcend the comprehension of our greatest theologians. Verily, the Rosary is both an epitome of the Old Testament and an abridgment of the New. This

we will better understand on a little serious reflection.

The Old Testament contains a number of prophetic books, which proclaim chiefly the character, the power, the glory and the dignity of the Messiah, together with a portrayal of His sufferings, His triumph, the grandeur and perpetuity of His kingdom, the Church. With these is joined the history of the Jewish nation—of that strange people chosen to guard the sacred prophecies. The New Testament records the fulfilment of these prophecies. The Virgin mentioned by Isaias [1] conceived and brought forth a Son. His precursor was sanctified in the womb of his mother.

The Divine Child, as foretold by the prophet Micheas,[2] was to be born in Bethlehem and presented in the Temple, an offering which gave more glory to the new Temple than was ever conferred on that of Solomon. The sufferings of the Messiah, so graphically predicted by Isaias [3] and David,[4] are recorded in the Gospels. The glory of Christ's tomb, His ascension into heaven, are implied by David [5] when he tells us that the angels are commanded to lift up their gates that the Redeemer may enter in. And, again, the outpouring of The Holy Spirit is mentioned by the prophet Joel.[6] All these mysteries we find pathetically described in turn by the Evangelists. And now, does not the

[1] Isaias vii. 14. [2] Micheas v. 2. [3] Isaias liii.
[4] David Ps. xxi. [5] David Ps. xxiii. 7. [6] Joel ii. 28.

Rosary of our Blessed Mother present these saving truths to us for our daily meditation?

The Church divides the ecclesiastical year into certain periods of joy, of sorrow, and of triumph. Here, again, the Rosary offers the faithful an easy and most efficacious means of entering into her spirit, of uniting in her sublime liturgy. The Church's great aim is ever to glorify God and to sanctify the souls intrusted to her care. For the first, she never ceases to labor day and night; her zealous religious Orders are continually chanting the praises of God in the inspired words of the Royal Prophet. Throughout the world the adorable sacrifice of the Mass is offered up to give glory to the Creator, through the mystical renewal of the passion and death of Jesus Christ. Three times each day she calls on her children, by the Angelus, to be mindful of the great mystery of the Incarnation. But millions of the faithful are unable to unite with the priest in the chanting of the Divine Office, or at the daily sacrifice of the Mass. To all such the Rosary affords an admirable means of uniting heart and soul in the worship of God, in accord with the spirit of the Church. The beads supply the place of the Psalms, by enabling us to glorify our Creator and accomplish His adorable will.

The Joyful, Sorrowful, and Glorious Mysteries of our Rosary unite us with the thought of the Church in the different seasons set apart to commemorate the life, passion, death and triumph

of the Saviour. Hence, the Rosary is called the breviary of the laity, the catechism of youth, the companion and solace of old age, the instructor of the simple, and an inexhaustible book of meditation for our greatest theologians.

As a means of sanctification, apart from the Sacraments and the Mass, there is nothing more powerful than the Rosary. It is a key to the most intimate knowledge of Jesus and Mary. It is an effective way of attaining to the perfection of charity. The young artist is taught to turn his eyes frequently on the works of the great masters, that he may learn to produce masterpieces like unto theirs. Now, Jesus is the Master of the Christian life; He is the Model whom we should all study to imitate. "Be ye followers of me," says St. Paul, "as I also am of Christ."[1] By ever turning to contemplate that sublime Model the Christian soul will gradually imbibe His spirit, and will become an humble, though an imperfect, imitator of His sinless life. In the language of St. Paul, he will "put on the Lord Jesus Christ."[2] From the days when Our Lord walked among men, it has been the constant aim of His devout followers to ponder upon His life with a view to imitating His example, and thereby becoming more acceptable in His sight. For this purpose His every word and act has been studied, His sacred wounds counted and meditated upon. His life has become the mirror in which His servants

[1] 1 Corinthians xi. 1. [2] Romans xiii. 14.

behold His sublime perfections and their own want of conformity with them.

It was with the desire of better contemplating this divine Model in undisturbed peace that thousands of His zealous followers retired into the lonely depths of Egyptian solitude, there to be continually hidden and absorbed in Him who was the object of their hearts' desire. So ardent has ever been the love of the true disciples of the crucified Master that they have never ceased to court persecution for His sake and, like the Apostles, to rejoice in sharing His sufferings. Nay, they have carried their ardor so far as to crucify their own bodies by most severe penances, in order to render them more like to His. Nor has Our Lord, on His part, been wanting in encouragement of those who sought to become like unto Himself. By stupendous miracles of grace (as we read), some of the most fervent of the saints have even had imprinted on their persons the outward marks of the Blessed Redeemer's bodily tortures. Witness, for instance, St. Francis of Assisi, who, like St. Paul, could say, "I bear the marks of our Lord Jesus in my body."[1] Witness, too, St. Catherine of Siena, St. Catherine of Ricci, St. Teresa and so many others, who bore the wounds of Jesus Christ, reproduced upon their bodies or in their hearts. Now, the Rosary, with its meditation on our crucified Master, has been declared by the saints to be one of the

[1] Galatians vi. 17.

most effectual means of reaching the sanctity which these holy souls attained through the most heroic mortification.

Inseparably united with the life of Our Lord is that of His immaculate Mother. It is her Son whom the Rosary proposes for our meditation. As Jesus was the most perfect of men, so Mary was the most perfect of women. If we are tempted to say that the life of Jesus, since He is divine, is too elevated for our imitation, the temptation must be dispelled by the contemplation of a creature like ourselves reflecting His perfections even as the moon reflects the brilliancy of the sun. The Rosary presents to us that immaculate one, hailed by an archangel from heaven as full of grace; the modest handmaid of the Lord, conformable in all things to His will. We behold her in her profound humility, pouring forth her soul in sublime praise to her Creator and ardently desiring the accomplishment of His every wish, no matter what sufferings it may involve. We see her later in the Temple, presenting the treasure of her soul, her all, in obedience to the designs of her heavenly Father. Later still, we behold her seeking her child with more than a mother's love and sorrow, when for her greater sanctification He is lost for three days from her sight in Jerusalem. Then, in the Sorrowful mysteries, she is presented to us as the patient, silent spectator of the varied and bitter sufferings of her Son, thereby teaching us in our trials

meek resignation to the adorable will of God. Oh, how many sublime lessons of virtue are given to us by Jesus and Mary in our treasured Rosary!

We have here some of the reasons that have led unnumbered servants of God, from the days of St. Dominic, to love and cherish this form of prayer, revealed by our Blessed Mother. Because of its wonderful efficacy in advancing souls in the way of perfection, and its power in obtaining heaven's choicest graces for the faithful, Leo XIII., of holy memory, frequently and energetically urged the bishops of the world to seek in every way to propagate the beautiful devotion of the Rosary. The great Pontiff declared that he saw in it a sovereign remedy for the evils of our day, arising, as they do, largely from forgetfulness of God's supreme dominion over us and our dependence on His adorable Majesty. The trend of modern unbelief is to lead us away from the knowledge of God, and to destroy His creatures' humble dependence on His almighty sovereignty. The world to-day is fast losing sight of Jesus and all He did and suffered for the elevation and regeneration of our race. The Rosary meets and defeats these evils by proposing to us the grand mysteries of our Faith, by keeping before us the most sublime revelations of sanctity. In the "Our Father," we recognize God's supreme dominion over all. We implore a universal reverence for His holy Name: we desire His will to be done

by all His children, and we pray that His kingdom be established on earth as it is in heaven. In the "Hail Mary," we proclaim our belief in the Incarnation, and call upon our powerful advocate and Mother to plead for us with her adorable Son. To these prayers and petitions, the most effective that can be offered to God or to our Blessed Mother, we unite our meditations on the great truths of religion, God's love for us, and all that His Son has done and suffered for man's salvation.

How, it may be asked, does the Rosary benefit those who neither practice it nor believe in the truths which it teaches? We answer that, even as in the time of St. Dominic it obtained through the Mother of God the reformation of that age and the conversion of its most obdurate sinners, so now it may prove, under God, the means of reforming many a sinner, of bringing many of our separated brethren into the true fold of Christ. Certainly, Leo XIII. hoped by an increase of devotion to Our Lady of the Rosary to remedy through her powerful advocacy the grave evils which afflict modern society.

The words of the great Pontiff, in his Encyclical of 1883 to the patriarchs, cardinals, archbishops and bishops of the Church, are worthy of serious consideration: "Our merciful God," he says, "as you know, raised up against those fierce enemies (the Albigenses) a most holy man, the illustrious parent and founder of the Dominican Order. Great in the soundness of

his doctrine, in the example of his virtue, and in his apostolic labors, he undauntedly proceeded to attack the enemies of the Catholic Church, not by force of arms, but by that devotion which he was the first to institute under the name of the Holy Rosary. In this he wholly trusted; and by his preaching and that of his brethren he spread it throughout the length and breadth of the earth.

"Guided by divine inspiration and grace, he foresaw that, like a powerful weapon, this devotion would be the means of putting the enemy to flight and of confounding his mad impiety and audacity. Such, in fact, was the result. Thanks to this new form of prayer—adopted and carried out as instituted by the holy Father, St. Dominic—piety, faith and unity began to return. The projects and devices of the heretics came to naught: many wanderers returned to the way of salvation, and the wrath of the impious was checked by the arms of those who rose in defense of Catholic teaching."

We shall now briefly consider the use of beads as an aid to prayer. There are many kinds of beads, but only one Rosary. We have, for instance, the beads of St. Bridget, the Seven Dolor beads, the beads of the Five Wounds, those of the Immaculate Conception, and others. Beads were used even by the early Christians as reminders or reckoners of their vocal devotions; and all beads were intended as aids to the faithful in their prayers. The Psalms were early col-

lected by the Church for daily recitation by the priests; but the laity also desired to unite with God's anointed in singing the praises of their Creator. It was impossible in the early ages of the Faith for the vast multitude of Christians to possess copies of the Bible, or even of the Psalms. There were no such books as our modern manuals of prayer. There was no printing press, and all books had to be wrought out, one by one, by the slow, laborious, expensive agency of the pen. Many believers, too, were unable to read. To make up for this deficiency, prayers were composed and, together with texts of Scripture, committed to memory by the great body of the faithful, that in this way they might join in spirit with the Church's ministers in their chorus of divine praises. These prayers were numbered, and their number was represented by small pebbles which were transferred from one pocket to another, as the devout Christian daily fulfilled his obligations.

Our dissenting brethren would have us believe that Our Lord intended the Bible to be the chief means of propagating and sustaining Christianity, to be the manual of our daily prayer and meditation—in short, to be the sole rule and guide of faith. A few simple reflections will suffice to show us how utterly untrue is this contention, which, because of its sheer falsity, appears to be rapidly leading its believers and advocates into rank infidelity. Christ gave no command that the Bible should be written.

He did not write a line of it Himself, and three hundred years had elapsed after His death before the faithful could know what the genuine Scriptures really contained. Moreover, not one of a thousand of those who believed in Christ could procure a copy of them. Furthermore, the price of the Bible put it out of the reach of the vast majority of the faithful down to the Sixteenth Century, when with the invention of the printing-press books of every kind began to multiply. Until then, each word of God's inspired truth had to be written out, and, after being diligently compared with the approved text, had to receive the approbation of competent authority before it could be put into the hands of the faithful. Ah, no! the Bible was not the great means that Christ established for the propagation of His Church. He selected a few faithful men; them He instructed and inspired; into them He infused His spirit, sending them forth to preach His Gospel to the poor as well as to the rich. This universal preaching of the Gospel was one of the striking signs of His divinity that Christ gave to the disciples of John the Baptist when He bade those messengers tell John that "the poor have the Gospel preached to them."[1]

History declares that St. Gregory Nazianzen, one of the early Fathers of the Church, composed beautiful prayers which he taught the faithful; but many, unable to commit them to memory,

[1] Luke vii. 22.

ST. ALBERT'S COLLEGE LIBRARY

offered to God praises of their own composition. Numbers of the Christians, after the example of David and the practice of the Church, prayed each day seven times to the Creator. Prayers were also offered to the Blessed Mother. And when her devotees could find no flowers to lay at her feet or to crown her image, as a substitute they addressed to her loving petitions, and sweetly sang her praises.

The Jews were accustomed to reckon their prayers upon beads: but the first Christian, as far as is known, to make use of beads on a string for purposes of prayer was St. Bridget of Ireland. That her nuns might more conveniently recite their daily office of *Paters*, or "Our Fathers," she strung together as many beads as there were *Paters* to be recited; and for this reason the beads were long known by the name of *Paters*. The custom introduced by the great abbess gradually found its way into all the convents of the British Isles, spreading thence through continental Europe. Later, we find Peter the Hermit, who fired the people of Europe with a desire of rescuing the Holy Land from the Mohammedans, carrying a string of *Paters*, attached to his girdle. And Father Pascal Robinson, in his new life of St. Clare, tells us that she also had her nuns recite their prayers on beads.

But none of these were the beads of the Rosary. God reserved this beautiful devotion for a time of sore trial to His Church; and as it was through Mary that He gave us His adorable Son, so it

was through her that he gave the world the prayer so especially pleasing to God and His Virgin Mother. The saint whom she selected for its introduction and propagation was the heroic Dominic Guzman. For seven weary years he had prayed and labored for the conversion of the Albigenses, a powerful and irreligious sect that had spread desolation over a large portion of Southern France; whose paths had been marked with rapine and blood, ruined provinces and burned church s, and who were possessed with a satanic hatred of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, and of His Immaculate Mother. Seeing his efforts bearing so little fruit, the saint appealed to the Mother of God to aid him in the conversion of that obdurate people. It was then that Mary appeared to him. Addressing her devout servant, she said: "Be of good heart, Dominic; you know it was at the price of the blood of God's only-begotten Son that the souls of men were ransomed; nor is it His will that those whom He redeemed should now perish. There shall be a remedy for these many evils. Make known to the people, then, the form of prayer I am about to give you; teach them that it is most agreeable to my Son and to me. It shall be a great means for the overcoming of heresy, for exterminating vice and encouraging virtue, for imploring the mercy of God. I shall be ever ready to succor those who invoke my aid through this form of prayer, which I leave to you and your Order as a lasting in-

heritance." She then made known to him the nature and form of the Rosary, and added: "The earth will remain barren until watered by this heavenly dew." [1]

Having heard these astonishing words, Dominic hastened to the principal church, whither the people had gathered at the sound of a bell miraculously summoning them at an unusual hour. Burning with increased zeal, he proclaimed the new devotion revealed to him by heaven's immaculate Queen. His words, inflamed with divine charity and vividly depicting the sufferings of Jesus and the love and dolors of Mary, softened the hearts of his audience. Wonderful conversions followed. Soon the hardened people were reclaimed from their errors and became faithful followers of Jesus Christ. The victory was complete. The Rosary triumphed. It was its first glorious victory; but others soon followed, of which we shall be pleased to speak to you hereafter for your consolation, your instruction and your edification.

O Blessed Mother of God, we thank you from our hearts for having revealed to the world this glorious devotion, so pleasing to you and to your adorable Son! Let us, then, by your aid, strive to be faithful in the practice of this divinely-inspired devotion. It will enable us the better to know and love you and your Son, Jesus, and will enrich our souls with the choicest blessings of heaven.

[1] Crown of Mary, p. 30.

THE POWER OF THE ROSARY

"WHAT folly," cries the skeptic, "to believe that three hundred Israelites under Gideon should defeat the Madianites (innumerable "as a multitude of locusts") by crashing together earthen pitchers and waving lighted lamps!"

"What folly, to claim that the children of Israel caused the downfall of the walls of Jericho by walking around them seven times, and shouting, whilst their priests blew long and loud on the trumpets of the jubilee!"

"How foolish of the boy stripling, David, to dare assail in combat the mighty Goliath with no other weapon than a few pebbles from the brook!"

Yet the result in all these instances proved that the chosen people were acting under divine guidance. Shall our dissenting brethren, then, consider it foolish for Catholics to make use in prayer of a few beads, which we count a certain number of times? It would be well for them to know that in this we are guided by the teachings of our Holy Mother the Church, who on many occasions has approved, through her supreme Pontiffs, the wonderful power and efficacy of this simple devotion. Urban IV.

attests that each day the Rosary procures innumerable advantages for Christian people. Sixtus IV. said that this manner of prayer is advantageous both to the honor of God and of His Virgin Mother, and is particularly calculated to avert the dangers which menace the world. Leo X. declared that the Rosary was instituted against heretics and pernicious heresies. Julius II. called the Rosary the glory of the Church: and St. Pius V. (surnamed the Pope of the Rosary) proclaimed that with the spread of that form of prayer the faithful commenced to be ardent in their holy meditations, the darkness of heresy was dissipated, and the light of Catholic Faith shone forth with all its splendor. Gregory XIII. assures us that the Rosary was instituted by St. Dominic in order to appease the anger of God and to implore the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Gregory XIV. teaches that the Rosary is the destruction of sin and the recovery of grace and glory. Before him, Adrian VI. had said that the Rosary is the scourging of the demon; and Nicholas V. cried with admiration: "The Rosary is the tree of life which raises the dead, heals the diseased, and preserves those who are in health." [1]

Whence has the Rosary its remarkable power? Is it merely in the virtue of a few beads strung together? Ah, no! It is in the prayers said on these beads, and in the faith of those who recite

[1] Most of these quotations are taken from the Encyclical Letter of Leo XIII., Sept. 1, 1883. See Hautrive, Vol. XV., p. 158.

these prayers with devotion. Had the Israelites not looked up to the brazen serpent, they would not have been healed; had they not gone around Jericho as commanded, its walls would not have fallen; had Naaman not washed seven times in the Jordan, he would have not been cleansed. It was their faith in the teachings of their spiritual guides that obtained for these children of the Old Law the special favors of heaven. Now, we reverently ask, why are we (the children of the new dispensation) required to say ten beads or fifty beads, believing that great blessings and graces are attached to their recital? It is because Mary has revealed this devotion to us (as tradition teaches) through her servant, St. Dominic; and the faithful, in obeying her, know at the same time that they are obeying Almighty God, since she has ever done His will and sought His glory, as His humble handmaid.

Ah, yes, the enlightened Catholic is well aware that the Blessed Mother of God does not institute or inaugurate any religious Order or any practice of devotion which is not in accordance with the will of her heavenly Father. Much more clearly does Mary see the face of God than the angels behold it; much more perfectly than the greatest saints and doctors does she know the mind of God, as to what will best procure His honor and glory and the salvation of souls for which her adorable Son died on Calvary.

The ancient Fathers tell us that Jesus made

His Mother the dispenser of His graces and the channel of all the good His mercy is willing to bestow upon us. Mary, on her part, has been pleased to reveal to us the best means of obtaining the treasures committed to her charge; and this she did signally (as tradition tells us) when she revealed to St. Dominic her sacred Rosary.

Beside the ardent desire of the Mother of God to bestow upon men the spiritual treasure committed to her keeping, the Rosary places the most powerful of all prayers on the lips of the faithful. The first of these is the "Lord's Prayer" given us by the Son of God Himself, who not only instructed us to ask and we should receive, but in this divine prayer places upon our lips the very words that we should employ in our petitions. Now, the Son of God cannot refuse what He has thus solemnly promised to His children. The second prayer of the Rosary, and the one so often repeated, is equally divine, for its salutation was first uttered by an archangel, deputed as heaven's ambassador by the Almighty Himself. It is a wonderful prayer for many reasons—it touches the heart of our immaculate Mother by recalling to her the highest dignity that God could confer upon a creature. In the first part of the "Hail Mary," we see the holy Virgin selected from among all women, and placed above all women, in being declared full of grace and blessed above all the daughters of Eve. But farther on, we hear her congratulated by the mother of the Baptist on that sublime

and solitary prerogative—that wondrous privilege than which God has nothing higher to grant. Here, we are allowed to remind Mary that she was elevated almost infinitely above all her sex, and for what purpose? To give poor sinners a Redeemer; to be the nursing mother of the Lord of heaven and earth. Again and again we remind her that she is great for our sake; and, therefore, that we have a special right to ask her aid and assistance before God, and the bestowal of those graces intrusted to her by her adorable Son. Truly, then, the Rosary must be of powerful efficacy with God and His Blessed Mother, seeing that it is composed of these sublime prayers, which, if recited with sincere faith and piety, cannot possibly be rejected by heaven.

We need not be surprised that the great saints of the Church from the time of St. Dominic were so devoted to this form of prayer. St. Louis, King of France, day by day, no matter how occupied or absorbed by his royal duties, always managed to say his Rosary. St. Ignatius, the founder of the Society of Jesus, recited the Rosary daily. He kept his beads upon his arm that he might not forget the sacred mysteries, and that on his awaking each morning he might give them his first thought. In the midst of his great labors, St. Francis Xavier recited his Rosary before taking his repast. When it happened that he was not able to say it during the day, he said it at night. Desiring to inspire

all with this devotion, he not only preached it, but carried his chaplet around his neck, and employed it to perform some of his stupendous miracles. St. Francis de Sales made a vow to say his chaplet every day, and this he recited with so much devotion that he employed an entire hour in meditating on the fifteen mysteries. No matter how great his labors or how late his return from his apostolic journeyings, he always managed to practice this devotion. St. Vincent de Paul constantly carried his chaplet on his cincture, both to be able to say it frequently, and as a mark of his love for the Queen of Heaven. Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque, from the fourth year of her age, recited the entire Rosary each day, kissing the ground at each *Ave*. It is believed that it was this fervent invocation of our Blessed Mother that obtained later from her Son the sublime revelation of His Sacred Heart to that devoted religious. St. Charles Borromeo called the Rosary the most divine of all devotions. He recited it each day on his knees. In a pastoral letter, he recommended to all in his diocese the daily recitation of the Rosary.[1]

Besides the above testimony to the power of the Rosary, we may rest assured that it is this devotion especially that merits the presence of Our Lord. Since Christ once declared that "When two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them," [2]

[1] See Hautrive, p. 170–171. [2] Matt. xviii. 20.

it is very consoling to reflect that the Rosary, in a particular manner, gathers together the members of a Christian family, and, with Christ in their midst, unites them heart and soul in pouring forth their supplications to the throne of heaven. The great Pontiff Leo XIII., realizing how wonderful this devotion is to bring God's blessing on the individual and on the family, begged the patriarchs, the cardinals, and the bishops of the Catholic world to urge upon the faithful not to allow any day to pass without their uniting in saying at least five decades of the beads.

In conclusion, we may add that there is one region in which the Rosary is especially powerful. It is called Mary's kingdom of the suffering souls. With wonderful generosity, our Holy Mother the Church has enriched this devotion with indulgences above and beyond all others in favor of the souls in purgatory. The present Holy Father, Pius X., even grants one hundred years and one hundred Lents each day in favor of those who reverentially carry the Dominican beads around their person. The indulgences for saying the beads are so great that it would be impossible to enumerate them in one discourse; and the Dominican Order, to the end that the faithful may constantly practice this beautiful devotion, has granted to the members of the Rosary Confraternity a share in all its Masses, recitations of the Divine Office, missionary labors, fasts and austerities.

THE OUR FATHER

WHAT happiness for us to know that we are never alone in this mortal life, but always in the care and under the watchful eye of our heavenly Father! The countless thousands who daily traverse the ocean feel secure under the guidance of a skilful captain, knowing that he is thoroughly versed in nautical science and can conduct them safely to port. But how weak is man's power, how limited his knowledge and wisdom, in comparison with the knowledge, wisdom and power of God! When we gaze on the starry heavens, and behold those mighty worlds which majestically move therein with almost lightning speed: when we see the sun, day by day, arise to illumine our world at the command of its Creator, we are forced to cry out with the Royal Prophet: "O, Lord, our Lord, how admirable is Thy name in the whole earth!"[1] When we contemplate the beauty of the flowers of the field, when we study the countless multitude and variety of God's creatures, their wonderful structure, their mysterious instinct for their own preservation and government, and then reflect that God directs and

[1] Ps. viii. 1.

takes care of all, we must cry out again with the Prophet: "The heavens show forth the glory of God, and the firmament declareth the work of His hands."[1] How sad it is to think that man, "so fearfully and wonderfully made," beholding the mighty works of God, their order, harmony and perfection, should fail to acknowledge His supreme dominion and pay to Him that homage of love and adoration which is due to His adorable Majesty! The Evangelist has said that the world was made by Him, but the world knew Him not.[2] That was true in the days of St. John: it is especially true to-day. In our age, which is called enlightened, men boast of their scientific and intellectual achievements; they extol the breadth and penetration of their minds, the glory and strength of their arms, forgetting, the while, that all that they are and all that they have are the gifts of a bountiful God. They boast of the beauty of their country, the grandeur of its scenery, the richness of its soil, the lusciousness and abundance of its fruits, and at the same time they boldly rob the "Giver of all good gifts" of the honor, glory, reverence and thanksgiving which are His due, and His alone.

How the perverse ingratitude of man must have pained the heart of the Son of God when, coming down from heaven, He beheld His eternal Father thus deprived of His glory, whilst senseless images were worshipped, thanked

[1] Ps. xviii. 1. [2] John i. 10.

and adored for the blessings which His omnipotent hand alone had bestowed! How Jesus burned with a desire to make His Father known and loved and adored by His ungrateful children! For this He preached; for this He toiled and labored. It was not His own glory that He sought, as He tells us, but the glory of His Father. It was to promote that glory that Christ established His kingdom, the Church, and gathered around Him those who were to extend that kingdom throughout the world. Their mission was to uproot idolatry and bring men to the true knowledge and love of God. But the most sublime act of our Redeemer was that which He performed on Calvary, and which He performs every day, and will continue to perform till the end of the world. That act was the offering of Himself in sacrifice, proclaiming by that sacrifice in a most perfect manner God's supreme dominion over life and death, as well as His infinite justice and sanctity. But it was not enough for the Head of the Church to suffer, and thus glorify God. The ardent desire of the Divine Victim from the beginning was that all men should worship and adore His eternal Father and recognize Him as the author of all their good. It is for this purpose that He placed on our lips the most sublime of all prayers. It is a brief prayer—for He would not burden us with a long one—but it is expressive of God's sovereign dominion over the soul of His creature. It sets forth His desire that

His will should be done on earth as it is in heaven, with a petition for all things necessary for both our spiritual and temporal welfare, whereby we are made to recognize that all blessings come from His adorable Majesty. Hence, the Prince of Theologians tells us that Our Lord taught us in the "Our Father" not only what we should ask, but also the order in which we should present our petitions.

How it must have rejoiced our Blessed Lord to see, as God only can see, the countless millions in every age and in every clime who, on bended knees, would utter in divers tongues that divine prayer to His heavenly Father! Here, it is placed by the devout mother on the lips of the innocent child, scarcely able to speak; there, the stripling and the young maiden, li ting their eyes to heaven, unite with unsullied hearts in imploring their heavenly Father for His blessing and His protection. Here, thousands in lowly chapels or in savage wilds, assembled in oneness of faith and fervor of piety, daily repeat the same prayer to the God of their fathers. And, again, in our magnificent churches and cathedrals God's consecrated ministers, amidst the silent adoration of kneeling millions, accompanied by the swelling organ, chant that glorious act of adoration and petition, according to the beautiful ritual of our holy Church. O my Jesus! through all Thy labors and sufferings it must have rejoiced Thy Sacred Heart to know how ardently that prayer would be loved by Thy followers,

and how many, young and old, rich and poor, learned and simple, would repeat it in the silent solitude of deserts, in the clamor of great cities, in the sacrifices of Thy confessors, or whilst the blood of Thy martyrs flowed joyfully for love of Thee!

Let us now consider more particularly the phrases of this sublime prayer. In its first words, you notice that Our Lord would lift our minds and hearts to heaven, where our Father rules in all His power and majesty. It is a sublime act of faith in the omnipresence of God, a direct address to our Creator. Then, recognizing that all creation was accomplished for the glory of His adorable name, we exclaim in the fervor of our souls, "hallowed be Thy name." In other words, May Thy name, O God, for whose sake and for whose glory all things exist, be praised and blessed and hallowed, worshipped and adored. With David, we cry out to the sun, the moon, the stars, and all creatures to unite in praising and blessing the name of their Creator.[1] And here, also, O Jesus! may we unite in begging Thee that blasphemy and all profane language be forever banished from the earth, that Thy own adorable name and the name of Thy Father may never be insulted by those for whom Thou hast shed Thy blood; and that all men may swell the chorus of Thy saints and angels in blessing Thy holy name forever.

[1] Ps. 148.

The second petition is : " Thy kingdom come." How ardently Our Lord desired the establishment of the kingdom of His Father! For this He labored and taught and bled; for this He sent forth His disciples everywhere to establish the kingdom of God on earth. And why should not His kingdom come? Does it not belong to Him? Did He not create it? What right have men or demons to claim God's kingdom for themselves? Tell us, O haughty rulers of the earth, have you ever created a blade of grass or a grain of sand? Can you for a single moment cause the sun to shine, or bring to earth even a drop of refreshing dew or rain? And you, proud philosophers, you, presumptuous scientists, who would daringly deny that this is God's kingdom, and the work of His hands, what have you done to place yonder mighty orbs in the heavens and constrain them in their circuits? At length recognize your impotency, and unite with all believers in God in crying to Him: " Lord, let Thy kingdom come: establish Thy kingdom of justice and holiness in the hearts of all men! Come, O Almighty Father, and reign in our hearts, and thereby purify and sanctify them. Banish therefrom the defiling influences of the demon, and make them burn with love of Thee even for eternity!"

The next petition is: " Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Again, how sublime the simple words! It is by the sovereign will of God that men and angels, earth and heaven

exist. By His will, the sun rises daily in its course, and all blessings flow to us. The eye cannot see, nor the hand move, nor the heart throb without the will of God. Jesus tells us that not even a sparrow can fall to the earth without the will of our heavenly Father. Why does Our Lord ask us to pray that His will be done on earth as it is in heaven? Because He gave freedom of will to Adam and all his posterity. Man is free to obey or to disobey; to love or to hate. Deprive him of that freedom, and he is like the soulless creature of the material world—like the sun in the heavens that must shine, the water that must flow in its channel, because neither can help it. Deprive man of his free will, and he becomes a blind agent, incapable of meriting or demeriting. Now, God wishes the free love of His children. "Blessed is the man," says Ecclesiasticus, "who is able to transgress and has not transgressed."[1] Yes, it is by this, our free service, that we are able to give God glory and merit for ourselves everlasting treasures in heaven. "You possess freedom of will," says St. Augustine; "use it properly, and you are like the angels in heaven; abuse it, and you are like the demons in hell." "No one," he tells us again, "is ever condemned to hell except through his free will." It was because He well knew that myriads would abuse that beautiful gift of God to their own perdition that our Blessed Lord put upon our

[1] Ecclesiasticus xxxi.

lips this beautiful petition, "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven," as if He would have us say: O my God and my Father, may Thy adorable will, which is all just, all wise, all holy, all perfect, be done by us as it is done by Thy angels and saints in heaven. As sun and moon and stars, as earth and sea obey, so may I obey Thee, so may all obey Thee. Blot out all error and heresy, and bring the mind and will of all men into obedience to Thy adorable will for time and eternity. May Thy holy will, O my God, be done in poverty or wealth, in health or sickness, in life and death, in time and eternity!

Having asked for God's glory, for the establishment of His kingdom and the fulfilment of His adorable will, we are next taught by Christ to ask for the things necessary for our own souls and bodies—"Give us this day our daily bread." Knowing well the evil of riches and of carnal sensuality, the insatiate appetite of avarice, Our Lord would curtail man's unbounded desires for the goods of this life. He would have us ask for sufficient for the day, "our daily bread"; to implore our heavenly Father to sustain us day by day, giving us nourishment for our physical health and strength; but, above all, for that "supersubstantial Bread," as St. Matthew has it,[1]—the Divine Bread of the soul which fortifies us against the daily assaults of our enemies. This petition, in short, expresses the Christian's ardent desire to be united with Jesus in the

[1] Matt. vi. 11.

Blessed Sacrament, that Bread of Heaven which is so essential for our spiritual support. "With desire He desired,"[1] says the Evangelist, to eat the Pasch with us, thereby uniting Himself to our weak nature, that in union with Him we should be enabled to do His heavenly Father's will, and praise and glorify Him in a worthy manner. Let us ask, then, with fervor and devotion, "Give us, O Lord, our daily bread,—give us the Blessed Bread of our souls, that we may not perish, but be forever united with Thee!"

Next, we petition for pardon and mercy. Knowing how frail and weak we are, and how prone to sin against both God and our neighbor, He teaches us in this petition frequently to ask pardon of God for our many offences. He implies that if we would seek the face of our Father to obtain mercy for our multiplied transgressions, we must be assured that we have first pardoned our neighbor his offences against us. In vain do we approach the throne of God, imploring forgiveness for our many transgressions, if our hearts wilfully retain any revengeful bitterness against even one of those whom He desires to bring to His kingdom. In another place Our Lord instructs us on this point, that if we come to His altar to make Him an offering, and in so doing remember that our brother has anything against us, we should leave there the gift, and, going, first be reconciled to our brother before we come again to make our offering;

[1] Luke xxii. 15.

for, says He, "If you will not forgive men, neither will your Father forgive you your offences."[1]

The last petition of the "Lord's Prayer" requires perhaps more explanation than any other: "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." "God is not a tempter of evils, and He tempteth no man," said St. James;[2] but He permits temptations to assail His elect, for temptations prove us. No man can claim that he is a brave soldier who has not been put to the test; it is on the battlefield that valor is manifested. It is not the soldier who hides from the foe who merits the approbation of his general, but he who manfully faces and conquers the enemy. How, then, can the Christian warrior prove his loyalty to His heavenly Commander if not put to the test? For this reason, God permits His children to be tried and tempted by the enemy, "who goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour;"[3] not that we may be conquered, but that we may know ourselves, that we may be thoroughly convinced of our own weakness and frailty, and seek from the all-powerful God the strength we need. In this sense He permits us to encounter temptation, to the end that we may become men and women of prayer, that we may gain new victories each day for our divine King and new merits for our souls. In conclusion, I may add that there is yet another

[1] Matt. vi. 15. [2] Jas. i. 13. [3] 1 Pet. v. 8.

significance to this petition. By the abuse of grace and by wilful love of danger we often deserve to be abandoned to our temptations. St. Teresa said that the devil is a chained dog, biting only those who willingly come near him. How often, by our presumption, have we been allowed to fall into temptation by recklessly allowing the enemy to approach us with a force which we could not of ourselves overcome! Hence, we ask God not to punish us by abandoning us to our own weakness and frailty, but so to strengthen us by His grace as to enable us to overcome the snares of the enemy, and be delivered from evil.

Often then, beloved, let us offer up the Lord's beautiful prayer with fervor and devotion, with a mind deeply recollected in the divine presence. Let it be on our lips in waking; let it be in our hearts during the day; let all our principal acts of the day commence with it; and let our lips whisper those sweet words as our eyes close in sleep. Above all, may heaven grant that, the Prayer of prayers being uttered with mind and heart when our soul is called forth from the body, after having thus continually honored and praised our heavenly Father during life, we may be permitted to join with His angels and saints in singing His praises for a happy eternity!

THE HAIL MARY

Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.—Luke i. 28.

AFTER the "Lord's Prayer," there is no vocal prayer more sacred or efficacious than the "Hail Mary." The "Hail Mary," together with the "Holy Mary," constitutes the second component part of the Rosary. This sublime prayer was first uttered by God's ambassador, the Archangel Gabriel, who was sent from heaven to obtain Mary's consent to cooperate in the great work of our redemption. The words of the archangel, like the first portion of St. John's Gospel, deserve to be engraven in letters of gold. They contain a magnificent eulogy of our Blessed Mother. That eulogy was placed on the lips of Gabriel by the Almighty Himself. The time had arrived for the accomplishment of man's redemption. The earth longed for the coming of the Desired of all nations; the prophets sighed for Him; the prisoners of Limbo earnestly prayed that the heavens would send down the Just One who would lead captivity captive, and, by releasing them from durance, would enable them to behold the face of their God. The

angelic hosts longed to behold the vacant thrones of the rebel angels occupied by the ransomed children of Adam. And Mary, the purest of God's creatures, who knew more than any other of His servants how much the world stood in need of a Redeemer, had continually poured forth supplications to her heavenly Father to send on earth the long-expected Deliverer. It was in the midst of her fervent petitions to heaven that the Angel of the Lord appeared before her, and saluted her with the sublime message, "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women."

Whether we consider the character of the ambassador sent by heaven, the nature of his message, or the sanctity of the youthful virgin to whom that message was delivered, we cannot but be filled with admiration at the means which God employs for the accomplishment of His designs. For this mystery of the Annunciation, God selects one of the seven resplendent angels that surround His throne of glory; one whom He had earlier employed to make known to His prophet, Daniel, the time and place of the birth of the Messiah. Never was such a salutation addressed by heaven to any other human being. Prior to this embassy, when an angel appeared to any of God's favored children on earth the latter were generally overwhelmed with fear and terror at the pure spirit's approach. Thus, we find Abraham falling prostrate in adoration at the approach

of his heavenly visitors.[1] Thus, Tobias and his family fell prone upon their faces, remaining so for hours, when the Angel Raphael appeared to them.[2] Thus, again, was Daniel filled with terror when the Angel Gabriel made known to him the will of heaven.[3] Not in any of these cases did the angel salute them in such terms as Gabriel saluted Mary. His words reveal the awe and reverence, as well as the profound astonishment, with which he was filled upon beholding such ineffable sanctity in a human being. Though surrounded in heaven by illustrious companions, seraphs aflame with divine love, cherubs irradiating glory before the supreme majesty of God, yet never did he behold in any of them such spotless holiness as he now discovered in this virgin daughter of Israel. Hence, the words of his salutation not only expressed his admiration for Mary's unrivalled sanctity, but also his congratulations on the signal honor conferred upon her by her heavenly Father. It was as if he had said: I salute thee, I congratulate thee, O immaculate one, O full of grace, transcending in dignity and holiness all that I have ever beheld among my fellow angels! Thou art full of grace (he declares), with that fulness which only God could bestow on thee!

St. Bernardine tells us that the rest of God's creatures received grace, as it were, drop by drop; but out of the ocean of God's immensity

[1] Gen. xviii. 2. [2] Tobias xii. 16. [3] Daniel viii. 17.

did Mary receive grace in order to fit her for her sublime mission.[1] The other saints have received abundant graces, but Mary has received in a measure surpassing all.[2] The abundance of grace to save all was in Jesus and Mary, but in a different way and in different measure.

St. Bernardine of Sienna declares that God calls no one to any dignity or position in His creation without fitting him for the proper discharge of its duties. Thus, he tells us that St. Joseph was especially prepared by God to be the foster-father of Our Lord. He was invested with wisdom, prudence, fortitude and justice in order to represent the heavenly Father in that little sanctuary, the home at Nazareth. But how much more wonderfully was Mary gifted for the discharge of the most sublime duties that God could intrust to any woman! She was destined to be the living tabernacle of the Divinity; the nursing mother to Him who feeds the birds of the air, who rules stars, and holds the mighty universe in the palm of His hand. She was to bear familiarly in her arms, to cherish intimately in her heart, Him before whom the highest angels in heaven prostrate themselves in humble adoration. O wonderful Ark of the New Covenant, wonderful sanctuary of the Divinity! Thou art, indeed, holy and full of grace, for "sanctity," as the Psalmist says, "becometh Thy house, O Lord."

[1] St. Bernardine, Sermon on the Assumption.
[2] St. Thomas, 2 Book Dissert. 6. C. I.

The angel declares to Mary that the Lord is with her; and here we are called to reflect upon the different ways whereby God is with all His creatures. God, as we know, is everywhere, supporting and sustaining everything that He has created. Nothing can exist for a moment without God. St. Paul declares that "in Him we live, and move, and have our being." This is termed by theologians the substantial presence of God, maintaining the existence of all that He creates or has created. In this way, God is with the good and the bad, the saint and the sinner, the beast and the tree. But there is another way in which God is with His servants—when He reigns in their hearts and rules them as His kingdom. In this way He is with all who are in the state of grace. There is still another way, more intimate, more holy, in which He is with His elect—when they are united to and, in a manner, transformed into God, and can say with St. Paul: "I live now, not I, but Christ liveth in me." For, even as the furnace transmutes the dark, solid mass of iron until it emits light and heat like unto the fire, though remaining still distinct from the fire, so it may be said that the souls of God's saints are in a manner transformed by God. The prince of the heavenly hosts—the leader of the angelic choir, Michael,—was said to resemble God; so also was Mary, the immaculate, intimately united with God by her holiness even before the Incarnation, thus partaking in a measure of the

divine nature, as St. Peter[1] has said. Even before Gabriel received Mary's consent, before that moment to which the angels looked forward, and for which the patriarchs and prophets sighed, when "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us," God, in the measureless ages of eternity, had possessed her whole being. He had gazed from the beginning on that masterpiece of His work, and ever guarded her not only from every stain that could sully her spotless soul, but from every snare and temptation of the arch-enemy.

"The Lord possessed me i the beginning of His ways, before He made anything from the beginning; I was set up from eternity and of old before the earth was made; the depths were not as yet, and I was already conceived."[2]

Thus was the Lord with Mary in a most sublime and exceptional manner, filling her whole soul with His grace, occupying her mind and her heart. She lived exclusively for Him and in Him; and He dwelt in her as in His most pure and holy tabernacle.

"Blessed art thou among women." These words proclaim the supereminent dignity of the Virgin of virgins. Foretold from the fall of Adam as the Woman who would crush the serpent's head, Mary was blessed far above the rest of her sex, that her blessing might descend upon all the daughters of Eve, her dignity elevate them, her glory enhance the honor and respect

[1] 2 Peter i. 4. [2] Prov. viii. 22–25.

which was to be theirs. Up to the days of our Blessed Mother the condition of woman was generally a most debased and defenceless one. She was the slave of her lordly keeper, pandering to his passions, subject to his whims and fancies. She was condemned to till the fields, dig the ramparts, build the fortresses of dominating masters, or forced to live a life more degraded still in oriental seraglios or harems. Even among the chosen people she was degraded through concubinage and polygamy. But through Mary woman has been placed on an equal footing with man, who was compelled by Christianity to respect her dignity, to maintain her honor, and to acknowledge her equality. From the establishment of Christianity, it has been the aim of our Holy Mother the Church to elevate woman, and to safeguard her dignity by maintaining inviolate the sanctity and stability of the bond of marriage. For centuries she contended against the royal monsters of Europe, in order to protect helpless woman. Wherever her sons carried the glad tidings of salvation, there was woman exalted and protected. The chivalrous heroes of the Middle Ages, in vowing themselves Knights of the Blessed Virgin, at the same time bound themselves everywhere to protect and defend woman. Ah, how little do the non-Catholic women of to-day realize that the universal respect and homage they now enjoy has come down to them through the grand old Church of Rome! They do not

know that they owe their treasured privileges to the honor and love that Catholic Christendom has ever entertained for the holy Mother of God, the immaculate Virgin who was blessed among all women.

When Mary heard the sublime words of the angel, the Evangelist tells us that "she was troubled." In her humility and complete self-effacement, she could not understand why such language should be addressed to her. She regarded herself, as she later declared to Gabriel, as an humble handmaid of the Lord. The very fact that she had long since made a vow of virginity was a proof that she had never dreamed of being the mother of the Messias, a traditional dignity to which many of Israel's maiden daughters did not fear to aspire.

The archangel then made known the object of his visit. "Fear not, Mary," he said, "for thou hast found favor with God; behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus."[1]

Filled with astonishment at this manifestation of the will of heaven, the thought of her vow presented itself to her. "How shall this be done, because I know not man?" It was then that the angel removed her doubt and her fear by making known to her that the transcendent mystery of the Incarnation would be accomplished by the power of the Holy Ghost,

[1] St. Luke i. 31.

and that thus her virginal purity would suffer no detriment.

O immaculate Virgin, fear not, thou art too dear to God for thy spotless sanctity to be allowed to suffer any injury! Hasten to give thy consent; the glory of God demands it, the salvation of souls cries out for it. Thy forefathers in Limbo stretch forth their hands to thee, calling upon thee to give thy consent that their deliverance may come. Hasten that all-important moment when the heavens will bow down to the earth: when the Word shall be made flesh, and dwell amongst us!

Mary, realizing far more perfectly than our greatest theologians how much the glory of God was involved in the message of the angel, how much the salvation of souls depended on the coming of the Messias, humbly bowed her head and gave her consent to the accomplishment of the great mystery of the Incarnation.[1] It was then that the heavens bowed down to the earth; it was then that the Holy Ghost, taking not the slime of the earth, as when He formed the first man, but the most pure blood from the sinless heart of Mary, formed from it a body, and breathed into it a living soul. At that momentous instant, the Son of God clothed Himself with a body like to ours; in the language of St. John, "The Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us." In this way, the message of the angel was fulfilled and Mary

[1] Luke i. 38.

became the Mother of God. Oh, here we can add with St. Elizabeth: "Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb!" We can add, too, that name which completes the Angelical Salutation—the adorable name of Jesus, which was given by God to His beloved Son made man for our redemption. Mary was the first of mortals who heard it pronounced by heaven's messenger: and at its mention her whole being thrilled with unspeakable emotion and delight.

Wonderful "Hail Mary," how many mysteries were thus accomplished at its first utterance! No wonder that the children of the Church delight to repeat it again and again. "Heaven rejoices," says Blessed Alanus, "the earth is astonished, Satan flees, hell trembles, the heart is inflamed with love, the flesh is overcome, sadness is banished, fervor is increased, the mind is illumined, the heart is enlarged, when I say 'Hail Mary.'" No wonder the saints delighted in often repeating that divine salutation, so powerful in its effects. The "Hail Mary" is a profession of our faith in the Incarnation of Our Lord, in the dignity, power and glory of His Blessed Mother. It is, furthermore, a renewal of our hope in God's mercy, and in His love for sinners. It is a declaration of our confidence in the powerful intercession of the Mother of God. It is an epitome of the marvelous prerogatives traced for us by heaven's own ambassador. Wondrous salutation! How

many miracles of grace hast thou accomplished! How many poor sinners suspended on the brink of despair over the infernal abyss, have looked up to Mary, and have found hope and peace and deliverance in repeating these blessed words! Every time we say the " Hail Mary " we rejoice the heart of our immaculate Mother by reminding her of that sublime moment when the almighty God of heaven and earth was pleased to descend and dwell within her virgin sanctuary. Let us then never tire of repeating the " Hail Mary." Let it be on our lips in joy and in sorrow, in trials and difficulties, in time of temptation and of danger. If we make a practice of repeating it frequently each day of our life, together with the " Our Father," we will surely breathe it forth in the moment of our dissolution, and obtain through it the all-powerful help of our Blessed Mother. She whom we have so often implored to pray for us " at the hour of our death " will surely assist us in our last battle against our infernal enemies and conduct us safely to life everlasting.

O wonderful *Ave Maria!* pronounced first in heaven by the great Creator, carried to earth by His angelic ambassador, and destined to be repeated to the end of time in the language of every nation under the sun, in childhood, in youth, in manhood and decrepit age! It is on the lips of virgins and matrons, it is uttered by earth's greatest warriors and sages. " Behold," said Bishop Martin of Paderborn, " behold

the truth whereon the Rosary reposes! Every time I repeat the 'Hail Mary' I recognize that, on this earth, there is no salvation except in Jesus and Mary. Each 'Hail Mary' is an appeal to the maternal heart of the Mother of Christ to plead with the heart of her Son for me, to apply to me the fruits of His redemption. And such an appeal will never be offered in vain. How many powerful blows you have given the infernal serpent, how many temptations you have conquered, how many acts of virtue you have offered to heaven by your 'Hail Marys' will be known only at the Day of Judgment."[1]

St. Bonaventure says: "Let us joyfully proclaim this 'Hail Mary' by which our redemption was commenced. Let us all say it a thousand times, nay, a hundred thousand times. Let us join with Gabriel in saying: 'Hail full of grace.' I congratulate you, O most pure, most chaste, most holy Virgin, chosen to crush the head of the infernal serpent, chosen to be the dwelling place of God Himself; and therefore, blessed among, and above, all the daughters of Eve!"

[1] Hautrive, Vol. V. 422.

HOLY MARY, MOTHER OF GOD, PRAY FOR US SINNERS

THE history of God's chosen people, the Israelites, furnishes us with a remarkable instance of their faith and confidence in intercessory prayer. The cruel Holofernes, the General of the Assyrians, having destroyed with a powerful army many small towns and cities of Judea, determined to take the strong city of Bethulia. When its inhabitants refused to open their gates to him he sought to reduce them to subjection by starvation. For this purpose he cut off the aqueduct that supplied them with water and surrounded the city by his troops, so that no food could be obtained by the citizens. Seeing themselves doomed to a frightful death by hunger and thirst, and deprived of all hope of human aid, they turned their minds and hearts to heaven for help. There was in their city a woman named Judith, "greatly renowned among all,"[1] who by prayer and fasting had served God faithfully, night and day, for many years. They came to her in their dire distress, begging her to intercede with the Lord for them. "Pray to the Lord for us," they said, "for you are a

[1] Judith viii. 8.

holy woman."[1] Judith, trusting in the mercy of God, went forth into the camp of the enemy, slew the proud Holofernes, and delivered her city from destruction. Then the Bethulians, full of gratitude, cried out to her: "You are the glory of Jerusalem, you are the joy of Israel, you are the honor of our people."[2] Judith was but a type of another daughter of Israel to whom we pray in all our necessities, and through whose instrumentality God was pleased to save the world. This is the Blessed Virgin Mary. It is because of Mary's sublime sanctity and her wonderful power with God that millions of times each day the prayer is repeated in the Rosary: "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners."

The "Holy Mary" was not a part of the Rosary, as taught by St. Dominic; nor was it, like the "Hail Mary," brought to us from heaven by an angel; yet it is equally divine, since it is given to us by God's infallible Church and comes down to us from the early ages.

In 431 a Council of the Church was convened in Ephesus to examine the teachings of Nestorious, who blasphemed against the Blessed Virgin and tried to prevent the people from honoring her as the Mother of God. As soon as the Council condemned his doctrine and declared Mary's right to be called the Mother of God, the faithful illuminated their houses in Ephesus, carried the bishops in triumph

[1] Judith viii. 29. [2] Judith xv. 10.

through their streets, and raised their voices and hearts in thanksgiving to heaven for the victory gained against heresy and for the vindication of the honor of our immaculate Mother. It was then that the beautiful prayer, the "Holy Mary," was made by the Council. In it the faithful were taught to recognize the dignity of our Blessed Mother and to implore her intercession—"Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners!" These words were added to the Rosary in the Fifteenth Century. The words "now, and at the hour of our death. Amen," were added later by the faithful. St. Pius V. approved of this addition, and it was through him that it was first inserted in the Roman Breviary, as we have it.[1] We commence this powerful prayer by saying "Holy Mary," to attest our belief in her sublime sanctity, to remind her that she has been declared full of grace by one of God's highest angels. The word "holy" is used to designate things dedicated to God's service, or persons consecrated to God; thus we say the "holy temple," the "holy water," the "holy oils." St. Peter calls the first Christians a "holy nation."[2] It is also used to designate that which in itself is sanctified and adorned by rare merits. Thus we say the "Holy Scripture," the "holy angels," who possess the happiness of heaven. Mary is

[1] Cf. Acta S. Sedis pro Rosario, Vol. II, p. 1186. Also Massillon, Acta S. Benedicti, Sec. V, No. 19.

[2] Peter ii. 9.

holy in both these significations. She was consecrated to God by her devout parents before her birth, for they had promised that should He favor them with a child they would dedicate it to His service. From early youth Mary dedicated herself to the service of her Creator; she was only a child of three years when she vowed to become His handmaid. But Mary was holy above and beyond all this; she was most pure and holy from the first moment of her conception, without the least tinge of imperfection, surpassing by far in sanctity all other creatures. St. John Chrysostom asks: "Who is there more holy than the Virgin Mary?"—and he answers, "Neither the Apostles, nor the martyrs, nor the seraphim. Among all creatures it is impossible to find anything more excellent than she."[1] The Franciscan Father Claus, commenting on the words of Ecclesiasticus, "my abiding was in the plenitude of the saints," says: "The Blessed Virgin thus spoke of herself, as if she would say, 'The saints of heaven shine with especial characteristic lustre; the patriarchs excel in faith, the prophets in hope, the Apostles in charity, the martyrs in fortitude, the confessors in the austerity of their lives, the virgins in chastity; but I contain all these excellencies, and approach nearest to the all-holy God Himself.'" "Whether we take the angels or the saints singly or collectively, they could not be compared with her in

[1] Roman Breviary, Sept. 12, Lesson 5.

sanctity."[1] From this supereminent sanctity of Mary, what results? That she is the nearest being to the omnipotent God Himself: and by this we mean that not only is her throne nearest to God in heaven, but that of all His creatures she most closely resembles Him, not by nature, but by sanctity. Mary's great sanctity is of much consequence to us, since it gives her access to God upon terms of greater familiarity than any other creature and endows her with greater intercessory power. Mary can thus present most efficaciously our prayers to Him, and obtain our requests more effectually than all the rest of the saints taken together.

We say "Holy Mary." After declaring our Blessed Mother holy, and trying to realize in our feeble way her wonderful sanctity, we repeat the powerful name "Mary." The Church added that name to the Angelic Salutation; she now repeats it in asking our Lady's powerful intercession. How dear to the Catholic heart is that sweet and blessed name! After the adorable name of Jesus, no name is more treasured or dearer to our heart than the blessed name, Mary. St. Bernard, that bright light of the Middle Ages, tells us of its sweetness, its wonderful power against our enemies and the enemies of God. "Mary is the Star of the Sea, to guide poor mariners to the haven of salvation." We give the name Mary to our children in Baptism and

[1] Claus. Specileg. Univer. lib. 3, No. 49. And Suarez In 3. P. Dr. Thom. disp. 18. No. 19.

in Confirmation; our nuns take it as their name in religion; many of our grandest churches and cathedrals are called after Mary; the bravest knights of the best days of chivalry pronounced it going forth to battle with the enemy, for all found in that sacred name courage and strength against the adversary.

"Holy Mary, Mother of God." Notice here that we do not say Mother of the Divinity. God, as God, has no mother. He always was what He is, and does not owe His existence to another. In calling Mary the Mother of God, we understand that Jesus, of whom she is mother, was truly God and man: and hence, being His Mother by nature, she is truly the Mother of God. Jesus has two natures, one human, the other divine, but these two natures form but one person. We are of two substances, but one body. We call her who bore us our mother, though she is only the mother of our material part; and so is Mary rightly called Mother of God, though she is only the mother of His humanity. Hence, she is thus the mother of a Divine Person, and this is why we call her Mother of God.[1] This teaching of the Church, which has often been attacked by heresiarchs, has ever been maintained by her as the very key of the arch of Christianity, and the clearest declaration of the twofold nature of Jesus Christ. Let us renew our faith, then, in the divine maternity; let

[1] Suarez, Comm. and Disputat. in 3 Thom. Disp. 22 Sec. 2.

us say with our whole heart, "Holy Mary, Mother of God," thereby acknowledging her sublime sanctity, her nearness to God, and her unlimited power to help us in our necessities. By thus saluting her, we remind her, through that sublime title of Mother of God, that it was for us sinners that that title was created; that, in a manner, she owes it to us, and that thus we have a special claim to her pity and intercession.

"Pray for us sinners." The words of the "Hail Mary" and the "Holy Mary," which we have so far mentioned, are words of honor and praise to our Blessed Lady, and of delight to all Christian hearts, for each time we address them to Mary they fill our souls with hope and joy. We believe that they also rejoice the heart of her divine Son, who must delight in seeing His well-beloved Mother honored by men. How can a good child, who tenderly loves his mother, find fault with our frequently recalling to his mind that which is her glory and happiness? These same words remind our Blessed Mother at once of the motives which she has for protecting us, and of the reasons which we have for confidently expecting her assistance. Being thus favorably disposed in our regard, and our confidence in her being powerfully animated, the moment has come to call her to our aid: and that we do when we say, "pray for us sinners." These are words which are rich in significance, and we cannot give them too

much attention. We do not invoke Mary as if she, of her own power, were to assist us, for no matter how powerful she may be, we well know that she is only a creature and of herself can do nothing. Certain unbelievers have dared to accuse us of doing an injury to God in praying to Mary, asserting that we consider her independent of God and able to assist us of her own power. Nothing is more false than this accusation; and this falsity is at once apparent when we consider the terms we use in praying to her. We do not say to her, "O Mary, pardon us, give us mercy, give us grace;" we beg her, rather, to pray for us, to intercede for us, to obtain for us such and such favors from God. Thus, the sovereignty of God is not only recognized, but He receives a new homage from the avowal of our unworthiness to address Him. St. Anselm, in his oration on the Blessed Virgin, says: "We ask Mary's assistance now, during our life, in all our trials, in all our dangers, in temptations, but still more we ask it at the hour of our death." Yes, Blessed Mother, when assailed by the enemy of our souls, we implore you to pray for us. Pray for us when the demon seeks to drag us from the path of virtue; but especially pray for us at that fearful moment when we shall have to render an account of our stewardship to God. Pray for us at the hour of our death, when the demon will fight his last and most terrible battle against us, when he will endeavor to fill us with despair by bringing before

us the sins of our life. Pray for us then, Blessed Mother, and be with us in that last hour!

Besides praying for ourselves, there are many others demanding the charity of our prayers; many in dire need of our spiritual alms; many who are ignorant of Mary's power, and many, suffering, who are unable to help themselves. The words of Our Lord to His disciples are applicable in a special manner to the members of the Confraternity of the Rosary. "To you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven!" [1] You, Rosarians, know Mary's power, Mary's goodness and Mary's care for all the children of God, whether believers or unbelievers. She desires that none perish, for Jesus died for all, and she ardently seeks to gain all those for whom He paid so dearly on Calvary. Mary, there present, saw her Son and her God in those last hours of His terrible battle for man's salvation. She knows better than any other creature the intensity of the love of Jesus for us poor sinners, and, at the same time, the enormity of sin and the requirements of divine justice. One of the conditions for obtaining pardon for ourselves and for others is that we ask for it. "Ask and it shall be given you," He said; [2] but instead of being worthy to ask, we have offended, we deserve stripes instead of favors for ourselves and for others. Let us not lose courage. There is one who is our sister and our mother, who has found favor with God; one who never offended

[1] Matt. xiii. 11. [2] Matt. vii. 7.

Him, one who is full of grace, not for herself alone but for all who seek her powerful assistance. He who, before His time, performed a stupendous miracle at the request of His Mother will not now turn away His face from her when she pleads before Him for her children. Yes, members of Mary's Rosary, you have a powerful mother in heaven, like Bethsabee of old, seated on a throne beside her Son, one who will not turn away her face.[1] Use, then, the powerful means you have of touching her immaculate heart; for she has promised to grant whatever we ask through her Rosary. Appeal to her for yourselves, for all your wants, spiritual and temporal, for your parents, brothers, and sisters; for those in danger of dying in sin, for the dying unbeliever, but, above all, for the poor suffering souls in purgatory.

We have in ancient history a remarkable example of maternal authority, and the obedience, through love, of an illustrious son to his mother. It is recorded in Roman history that Coriolanus, a noble Roman, was exiled from the Eternal City by the Senate—banished from his wife, his boy, his aged mother, and commanded never to return. Breathing threats, swearing revenge, Coriolanus went out among the barbarians, and excited their cupidity by telling them of the enormous wealth of Rome. He offered to train them to fight, that thus they might be enabled to gain a complete victory over the Romans,

[1] III Kings ii. 20.

and, after sacking the Eternal City, possess themselves of its enormous treasures. Soon he raised an immense army, led it forth in order of battle, and encamped within sight of Rome. The Senate, greatly alarmed, sent ambassadors to sue for peace. They were spurned by Coriolanus. Then approached the high priest of Jupiter, accompanied by a train of followers, supplicating mercy. Coriolanus refused even to see them. A procession of vestal virgins followed, imploring him, with tears in their eyes, to spare their shrines and the altars of their gods. But the heart of the warrior was steeled against them; he had no regard for their tears or their words of supplication. Then, another procession was seen, composed of the matrons of Rome, and at their head Volumnia, his aged mother, followed by his wife and little son. When he heard that his aged mother was coming, he arose from his tent, ran to meet her and lovingly pressed her to his heart. She knelt at his feet and said: "My son, have pity on the mother that bore thee, and for my sake spare Eternal Rome!" The heart of the warrior was softened. Though he believed that in justice he should punish those who had wronged him; though his heart still craved revenge; though he knew that his followers demanded of him that he pillage the city for the sake of the plunder, and that if he did not, his life would pay the forfeit, yet the prayer of his mother prevailed, and he said: "Mother, you have

saved the city, but you have lost your son!"

O Son of God, if a pagan mother could have such power over her son, how much more powerfully will Thy Blessed Mother intercede with Thee in our behalf, and though Thy justice demands that we should be punished for our offences, her prayers will prevail before Thy throne and, in consequence, cause Thy Sacred Heart to show even to the basest of us pity and mercy!

Let us, then, often remind our Blessed Mother of all that the Lord has done for her, and tell her that it was because of our miserable condition, our fallen state, that Her Son became man and suffered for us. Let us tell her that, in a manner, she owes her dignity to us poor sinners; and that therefore she should show us pity and help us in our necessities. "Turn, then, most glorious advocate, thine eyes of mercy towards us, and after this our exile show unto us the blessed Fruit of thy womb, Jesus."

The Five Joyful Mysteries

The Five Joyful Mysteries

THE ANNUNCIATION

LET us now venture to approach with sincere faith and reverence the greatest of our Rosary mysteries—the Incarnation. "When I consider the Incarnation," says Cardinal Wiseman, "when I reflect how the adorable Son of God annihilated Himself, taking the form of man, I am prepared to see Him crucified, and hidden under the veil of the Sacrament. No other mystery astonishes me." In the obscure city of Nazareth Mary, the lowly maiden chosen to be the divine instrument in this great mystery, dwelt with her espoused husband, the just man Joseph. Like Samuel, she was the child of prayer, born of parents who were advanced in years. In early youth she was presented by them to the Temple where, surrounded by virgin companions and under the care of pious matrons and aged ministers of the Holy of Holies, she advanced rapidly in the knowledge and love of God, as well as in the science of the Sacred Scriptures and the traditions of her race. There she vowed ever to keep her heart unsullied in

spotless chastity, that, like the lamp of the sanctuary, it might always burn for God, and for Him alone. Through the foreordained merits of her adorable Son, she was preserved from every stain of Adam's sin and every taint of carnal concupiscence. Like many of her race, she knew that the Messiah, long-desired of the chosen people, was expected. Better than Zachary, she knew that the promise which God had made to Abraham was about to be fulfilled; that the scepter had departed from Israel; that the time determined by Daniel was drawing nigh, and that, according to Isaias, a virgin would bring forth a Son who would be the Emmanuel—God dwelling with His people. She prayed more ardently and intelligently than prophet or patriarch that the Desired of the Eternal Hills should come; that the heavens should rain down the Just One, and the earth bud forth the Saviour—in other words, that heaven and earth would unite in producing the God-Man who was to come. In her meek lowliness, she longed for the advent of the favored Virgin predicted by Isaias, and prayed that she might be permitted to minister to her as an humble handmaid, never dreaming in her sweet self-effacement that she herself was to be the maiden elected from all eternity to so sublime a dignity.

It was to this humble little daughter of Israel that heaven's ambassador was sent to make known the will of God, and to seek her consent

to the great mystery of the Incarnation. Never did angel or archangel behold a creature so spotless, so holy, so absolutely possessed by God Himself. Hearken to the words of the heavenly ambassador: "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women." Never before did angel utter such salutation to any creature of God; for never had angel found such sublime sanctity even among his companions in the sinless realms of paradise. It was Gabriel, one of the glorious Seven who ministered to the Most High, who then made known to her the divine will and asked her consent to this stupendous mystery. She, remembering her vow of chastity, inquired of her celestial visitor how this could be, since she knew not man: thereby implying her determination ever to remain a virgin. But the angel removed her fears by making known to her that with God all things are possible.

It is the belief of many that, at that moment Mary saw in part all that was involved in her consent. Even as Moses foreknew that he was to suffer under Pharao; as Jeremias saw in vision what awaited him in his mission; as in the day of Pentecost the Apostles understood the sorrow and persecution which would befall them in the service of their Master; as the priest at his ordination, or the nun at her profession, realizes the toil, the self-sacrifice, the solemn responsibilities of their respective vocations, so, too, we believe Mary must have known

in part what was involved in her consent to become the Mother of God. In a mystic vision she beholds a tender, delicate female vainly seeking on a gloomy winter's night a lodging in an inhospitable city, whose every door is closed against her. She sees a young, girlish mother fleeing with her new-born babe to distant Egypt, because a jealous ruler thirsts for His life. She beholds, again, a mother in bitter grief, seeking her only and beloved Child, lost in a great city, where she fears that He may have been captured and destroyed by His enemies. Far in the dim distance, she discerns a lonely hill whereon a most sorrowful Mother gazes helplessly on her young and beautiful Son, whilst human fiends cruelly put Him to death. The vision changes. The depths of Limbo appear to her, whence her friends, her relatives, her ancestors, stretch forth their hands and call to her with sighs and lamentations: "O daughter of Israel! consent to become the mother of the Messiah, the Mother of Sorrows, that our Deliverer may come and liberate us from this prison and bring us to the kingdom of our Father!" Again, there rises before her a universe reeking with vice and rank with idolatry, her heavenly Father robbed of His glory, the nations crying for the light of Faith—for the liberty of the children of God. Yet another vision looms up before her as she beholds a glorious Church, a new Jerusalem coming down from heaven, wherein countless millions rejoice in

the practice of the true Faith, in the knowledge and love of the living God. Vast temples and stately cathedrals spring up here and there, dedicated to her honor; and unbounded power is given to her, the Woman decreed from the beginning to crush the serpent's head, to rescue redeemed souls from the bondage of that accursed demon. All this depends upon Blessed Mary's consent. She trembles, and is troubled at the archangel's saying, but charity prevails, ardent love of God and souls triumphs over maidenly fear: "*Ecce ancilla Domini!*" she whispers—"Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done unto me according to Thy word!" And lo! the Holy Ghost descends that instant upon her. Not of the slime of the earth, of which the first man was made, but of the most pure blood of Mary's heart is formed a perfect body, into which the Most High breathes a living soul. By the power of the Holy Ghost the Son of God clothed Himself with this body and soul, becoming man for our salvation. "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." Let us here humbly and gratefully adore the accomplishment of the most sublime mystery of Christianity.

As we have seen, our Blessed Mother proposes this mystery of the Annunciation and the Incarnation for our contemplation in the first decade of her most holy Rosary. She, the wisest, the most gifted of all women, well knew how essential it was to commence her great devotion with the contemplation of the Incarna-

tion. This mystery is the solid corner-stone of Christianity; it is the Rock of Ages which the archenemy and his satellites have ever persistently assailed and sought to destroy. Arius denied the Incarnation of God's adorable Son. All down the centuries that great dogma of Christianity has been attacked by heresy after heresy. And in no period of the world's history has the Evil One shown more determination to destroy faith in the divinity of Christ than in our present age. He who is the Light of the world, the Regenerator of man, the Redeemer of our race, would be dethroned from His divine dignity and brought down to the level of an ordinary child of a corrupt race, were such a thing in the power of the proud intellect of to-day. Sinful men refuse to be subject to His sacred teachings or to live the life of purity and self-denial which He proposes to them for their sanctification and salvation.

On the other hand, whilst this corner-stone of Christianity has been so bitterly assailed by the enemies of Christ, no doctrine gives more joy and consolation to His followers than that of the Incarnation. None has been so bravely or so nobly defended as the divinity of Christ. Countless millions of martyrs have shed their blood in defense of their belief in the Son of God made man. For this, generation after generation, the purest and best men in the Church have become His disciples and have dedicated their lives to carry belief in His teachings even

to the confines of the earth. For love of that Divine Spouse of holy souls, the adorable Son of Mary, what armies of generous daughters of the Church have rejected human love, in order to consecrate themselves entirely and irrevocably to their Redeemer!

In placing this dogma as the initial mystery of her Rosary Mary would inspire us with an ardent love for our heavenly Father, reminding us, in the words of her Divine Child, that God so loved the world as to give it His only-begotten Son. That is to say, He so loved the children of Adam as to deliver His well-beloved Son to all the shame and horrors of Calvary, that sinful men might be redeemed and come to the possession of eternal happiness. She would remind us also of the infinite love of Christ our Lord, who consented to the profound humiliation of the Incarnation in order to redeem and sanctify a fallen world.

From the Incarnation dates a new period in the world's history; in its brilliant light the silence and gloom of death have vanished for all true believers. There was glory given to the Omnipotent by this mystery of the Incarnate Word such as all the resplendent hosts in heaven could never have given Him. Ah, who can conceive the sublime act of adoration, of praise and thanksgiving which went forth from Mary's unborn Child to the throne of the Deity? May we not believe that then (as, later, to the God-Man on the banks of the Jordan) the Almighty

said to the Divine Infant: "Thou art My Beloved Son; in Thee I am well pleased."[1]

Therefore, let us now reverently contemplate the thoughts and desires of the Son of God in Mary's womb—in this prison, as it is called by the Fathers, which He selected as His temporary blessed abode. At the same time that He there offered unceasing prayer and praise to His Heavenly Father, He contemplated the world of the future spread out in vision before Him. He saw all its evils; all the miseries and sufferings that sin would bring upon it; the heresies that would arise, one after the other, to war against the kingdom which He would establish. He beheld how the demon, age after age, would endeavor to destroy the work which He had come to do. Was not that newly-formed Heart of the Son of God full of grief at sight of the vast multitude of souls, for which it would shed the last drop of its precious blood on Calvary, joining with His satanic enemies to rebel against Him and defeat His merciful designs? But, on the other hand, how that divine Heart must have rejoiced at the sight of the countless armies of noble heroes and heroines, venerable bishops, archbishops and martyrs, who would labor and suffer, bleed and die for love of Him! There, too, he beheld the valiant legions of young men who would, year after year, offer themselves as loyal and faithful soldiers to do battle under His standard;

[1] Luke iii. 22.

the multitudes of gentle virgins, the purest and the best of the daughters of men, who would elect Him to be their best-beloved, their only Spouse, consecrating to Him their young and stainless lives in vows of eternal love. May we not believe that, even as later on He longed for His Passion, for that baptism of blood whereby He was to accomplish the work of His Father, so did He earnestly desire the end of His captivity in Mary's bosom, that He might commence His life of labor and suffering, even though it were to terminate on the awful height of Calvary?

In this blessed mystery we have still another subject for contemplation. Mary realized, next after God, the wonderful favor that had been bestowed upon her. She knew that by the Incarnation she had become the living temple of the Deity. She possessed now, in mind and heart, the sublimest secrets of heaven, She was the new Ark of the Covenant, containing not the tables of the Law, not the showbread, nor the rod of Aaron, but, what was infinitely more holy, the adorable Son of God—the Author of the Law, the Bread of eternal Life. How profoundly she adored that unborn Son; how her heart went up in acts of sublime love and self-annihilation, giving praise to her Father for having intrusted to her care the greatest treasure of heaven! How she prostrated herself in spirit —in profound worship of the Divine Babe reposing in the silence of her bosom! And oh, if humility had not forbidden it, how she

would have delighted, for the glory of God, to make known to all men the marvelous mystery that had been accomplished in her! Aye, to cry out to the whole world to come and adore with her God's only begotten Son—the Desired of all nations—who had condescended to come in the flesh and dwell familiarly among us!

And now a third subject presents itself for our meditation on the mystery of the Annunciation. The secret design of the Most High was clearly known to Gabriel the Archangel, the celestial ambassador sent to negotiate with Mary concerning the Incarnation of the Divine Word. But he was not alone in the knowledge of the secrets of heaven. We believe that the vast angelic armies surrounding the throne of God knew also that the day had come for the fulfilment of the promise made ages before, to the progenitors of the human race. What rapturous delight it must have given those blessed spirits to know that from this sublime mystery unspeakable glory would accrue to their heavenly Father, incomparable peace and joy and happiness to their fellow creatures on earth! We can picture them coming (as in vision some of God's saints have seen them) to that humble dwelling of Nazareth, there to adore their God, their Infant King, clothed in human form, who lay hidden in the holy and immaculate tabernacle prepared for Him by His heavenly Father. How they praised and blessed Him for His paternal pity for our fallen race, and

offered themselves as willing and obedient co-operators in His merciful designs towards the children of Adam.

The Incarnation is the fountain-head of all graces and blessings to man. Through it our whole race has been signally ennobled and exalted; for in the taking of our common nature it was the design of God to unite us with Himself. "Ye shall be as gods," it was said of old. "God became man," asserts St. Augustine, "that man might become God." Here is the source of our true greatness. Man should not glory in his natural powers, nor pride himself upon his intellectual gifts, his beauty, wit or talents; for, as a'Kempis says, every natural good appertaineth to God; but he should rejoice that his nature was selected for the incarnation of the Deity in preference to that of the angels, and placed at the right hand of the Father through the condescension of His adorable Son. His union with our nature was the first step in the wondrous work of our regeneration. Later, He will unite Himself with us individually, after having purified us in that sacred blood which He will shed for us on Calvary. Oh, that man would realize his true dignity, his elevation by this stupendous miracle of the Incarnation accomplished by God in Mary! Now can we look up to heaven, now can we address our petitions to the throne of God, not as slaves of sin, not as captives of Satan, but as brothers and co-heirs of Jesus Christ. Now can we behold our nature

forever exalted in the kingdom of heaven, whilst we profoundly adore the God-Man seated at the right hand of His Father and continually making intercession for His brethren. O Blessed Mother of God! you knew better than all other creatures the greatness of the suffering as well as the greatness of the love involved in so great a mystery! You desire your children to be ever mindful of the incomparable price that was paid for their redemption!

Help us then, O Blessed Mother, to enter into the spirit of this first mystery of your Rosary; to meditate on it with love, with recollection, with adoration; to reap from it all the fruit which it is intended to bestow. Obtain for us, especially, ever to cherish with grateful affection the infinite love of our Father in heaven, who gave His only-begotten Son to save us. Ever remembering all that our Blessed Saviour did and suffered for us in the flesh, all the glorious cooperation of you, His Virgin Mother, in the work of our redemption, help your poor children to lay up treasures of salvation in the kingdom which the Incarnate Word hath won for us by His bloody Passion and death!

THE VISITATION

And Mary, rising up in those days, went into the hill-country with haste into a city of Juda. And she entered into the house of Zachary, and saluted Elizabeth. And it came to pass, that when Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the infant leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost: And she cried out with a loud voice, and said: Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.—Luke i. 30.

WITH reason is the Visitation of Our Blessed Lady to her cousin, St. Elizabeth, ranked among the Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary, for it contains many beautiful lessons calculated to fill our Christian hearts with joy, as well as with confidence in the powerful influence of our immaculate Mother. St. Luke will be our teacher in studying these lessons, for to him, among the Evangelists, was it given to transmit to us an account of the visit of the archangel to Nazareth, the consent of our Mother as cooperator in the work of our redemption, the Visitation, the Nativity, and the many other beautiful mysteries that cluster around the childhood of Our Lord. This Evangelist tells us that "In those days, Mary, rising up, went with haste into the hill-country of Juda to visit her cousin Elizabeth;" but he does not tell us

how soon this visit occurred after the apparition of the Angel Gabriel at Nazareth. We have reason to believe that the favored Virgin spent some days in prayer and in adoration of the adorable Visitor who had come to dwell within her. She was now the guardian of the Treasure and of the secrets of heaven. She was now the living Ark of the New Covenant in which the Holy of Holies deigned to dwell. O truly blessed among women! You now possess Him whom heaven cannot contain. "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb."

But lo! after these days of sacred retirement and ecstatic contemplation, a new desire began to possess the soul of our Blessed Lady. It might be called the burning desire of the Apostolate, that compelling impulse of the Spirit which urges the young priest, the young missionary, to hasten forth to preach the Gospel to those in darkness and in the shadow of death. Mary alone knew the glad tidings that the Son of God had come down from heaven, and that He was already incarnate to commence the work of redemption. How ardently she longed to convey the glorious news to a sinful and sorrowful world, to proclaim the infinite goodness and mercy of God to our fallen race! But how accomplish this? Her modesty forbade her to speak of it to her chaste spouse, St. Joseph; neither could she mention it to her neighbors, the women of Nazareth, for they would not under-

stand her; but, away among the hills of Judea, dwelt her saintly cousin Elizabeth, with Zachary her spouse, the priest of the course of Abia.[1] To her, Mary felt she could open her heart and proclaim the great things that God had done for her and for all the children of Adam. Besides, she had learned from the angel of her cousin's miraculous motherhood; she knew of Elizabeth's advanced age, and desired to hasten to her assistance.

Some of the Fathers, with Origen, give us another reason for Mary's haste in the Visitation.[2] They tell us that her adorable Son, reposing beneath her chaste heart, was urging her to make that visit. He came to purify and sanctify souls. He beheld the soul of his precursor (destined from eternity to go before Him and prepare His way) bound fast in the chains of original sin, and thus a slave of hell. Jesus longed to commence his work of sanctification by liberating John from the defilement, from the degradation, of his condition. He burned to form with him that intimate union which God delights to contract with the souls of the just.

Bossuet, the great Bishop of Meaux, speaking to one of his spiritual children of this beautiful feast, uses the following language: "One of the greatest mysteries of Christianity is the holy bond of union which the Son of God contracts with us, and the secret manner in

[1] Luke i. 5. [2] Cornelius a Lapide Com. in Luke i. 30.

which He visits us. I do not speak of those particular communications with which he honors some chosen souls: and I leave to your director and to spiritual books to instruct you as to them. But besides these mystic visits, do we not know that the Son of God approaches every day His faithful; interiorly by His Holy Spirit and by the inspiration of His grace, exteriorly by the Sacraments, and especially by the Adorable Eucharist?" Continuing in this strain, the great Bishop tells us that, in visiting His chosen souls, Jesus produces in our hearts three movements: First, He fills the soul with a great idea of His infinite majesty, which causes it to tremble on account of its baseness. But since this might overwhelm the soul and cause it to shrink from approaching its God, secondly, He inspires it through faith with an ardent de ire to run to Him. Then, at last, in the union which follows, He fills the soul with peace and joy and thus effects the condition which St. Paul describes when he says that "the peace of Christ exults in our hearts."[1]

In her visit to Elizabeth, it is believed that Mary was accompanied by her chaste spouse and guardian, St. Joseph; and mystical writers tell us that the angels of the Incarnation preceded and followed our Blessed Mother on her journey of love and benediction. The house of the aged priest, Zachary, was situated on the brow of a hill a short journey from Jerusalem,

[1] Bossuet, Sermon on the Visitation of the B. V. M.

but a long distance from Nazareth. It remains standing to-day, and has been converted into an oratory. Near it is a Franciscan monastery where pilgrims are hospitably entertained by the faithful sons of St. Francis. According to St. Luke, Zachary and his wife served God faithfully, walking in all His ways, thereby meriting in a measure the great honor of a personal visit from Jesus and Mary, as well as that of having a son destined by heaven to be the herald of his Redeemer. It was of that son, of that chosen precursor, that the Holy Ghost spoke through the Prophet Jeremias: "The Lord said to me, say not I am a child, for thou shalt go to all to whom I shall send thee, and whatsoever I shall command thee, thou shalt speak. Be not afraid at their presence, for I am with thee, to deliver thee, saith the Lord; And the Lord put forth His hand and touched my mouth, and the Lord said to me, Behold, I have given My words in thy mouth; I have set thee this day over nations and over kingdoms, to root up, to pull down, to waste and destroy, to build and to plant."[1] He was the Angel to prepare the way of the Lord.

John was appointed to denounce the wickedness of the people of his day. He was chosen to brave the very king upon his throne—to rebuke Herod to his face for the terrible crimes of which he was guilty. The son of Zachary came to be as a celestial light, illumining by his

[1] Jeremias i. 7–10.

spotless life the darkness of his age, and preparing for the coming of his divine Master by showing forth to all men a shining example of spotless purity, rigorous mortification and absolute poverty. No wonder Our Lord said of him: "None born of woman is greater than John the Baptist."

As soon as Mary arrived at the house of her cousin, she was the first to pronounce a salutation which filled the soul of Elizabeth with gladness and caused the child in her womb to leap with joy. It was then that Elizabeth, inspired by the Holy Ghost, completed the Angelical Salutation, or "Hail Mary," by crying out: "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb!" [1] It was then that she proclaimed the august and supreme prerogative of the Mother of God, declaring against all heretics who would later deny that exceptional dignity that Mary was the Mother of God. "Whence is this to me" (she cries) "that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?" [2] And again she says: "Blessed art thou that hast believed, because those things shall be accomplished which were spoken to thee by the Lord." And straightway our Blessed Mother gave expression to the pent-up feelings of her immaculate heart in that sublime anthem, the *Magnificat*, abasing herself in the humility of the handmaid, and rendering all glory and homage to her heavenly Father.

[1] Luke i. 42. [2] Luke i. 43.

Never did more perfect praise come from the lips of any of God's creatures than was then uttered by our Blessed Mother. That anthem, spoken ages ago, by the humble Virgin in the privacy of Zachary's house, was taken up by the infant Church of Christ, and for two thousand years has been repeated millions of times each day by rich and poor, by cloistered virgins and consecrated priests, in lowly wayside chapels and in the aisles and sanctuaries of our grandest cathedrals. It was then that Mary uttered her prophecy, which (it is worthy to remark) was fulfilled alone among the children of the Holy Roman Catholic Church: "For behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed, for He that is mighty hath done great things to me, and holy is His name." [1]

And what were the great things which the Lord did for Mary—the great gifts conferred upon her, of which she speaks in her wondrous Canticle? They were her immaculate purity, her absolute sinlessness, her sublime sanctity, which, according to St. Thomas, rendered her in a manner worthy of the dignity of becoming God's Blessed Mother.[2] Yes, O glorious Virgin Mother, truly, and with reason, did you say in your grand *Magnificat* that the Lord had done great things in your behalf! Not only did He have you in His mind from all eternity; not only were you foretold in the

[1] Ibid. i. 48, 49.
[2] St. Thomas Sum. I^{a}, II, XI ad 3, et 1–2^{ae}, LXXXI, 5, iii.

garden of Eden, at Adam's fall, as the Woman whose heel should crush the serpent's head; not only did the Deity hold you up in His omnipotent hands, preserving you from the stain of original sin, but He marvelously enriched you with graces far above and beyond those given to the rest of His creatures.[1]

We read in the Old Testament that when the Ark of the Covenant was brought to the house of Obededom, the Lord blessed the house of Obededom because of its presence.[2] We need not be surprised that the Baptist was sanctified in his mother's womb; that Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost, and that speech was restored to the aged Zachary by the visit of Mary, the living Ark of the Covenant, infinitely more sacred and more holy because of the presence within her of her adorable Son than was the Ark of old. By becoming the Mother of Christ, Mary became Mother of all the members of Christ; and far as the heavens are above the earth, Mary's love for us is above the love of all mothers for their children. The love of our neighbor is included in the love of God. The saints tell us that to love God with our whole heart and soul, mind and strength, embraces the love for all that He loves. But as none loved God as Mary loved Him, so, after God, none loves us as she loves us. She knows how much suffering we caused her Son, she knows how

[1] After St. Ephrem apud Suar. loco, Vol. XVI. 528.
[2] Kings vi. 11.

ardently He desires our salvation, and with burning love she endeavors not only to bring us to Him, but to secure for us all that is necessary for our salvation and perfection. St. Ambrose tells us that when Mary saw her Son dying on Calvary for sinners, she offered herself to His murderers that she also might die for us.[1] Father Nieremberg says: "The love of all other mothers for their children is but a shadow when compared to the love the Mother of God bears to each of us."[2] Next to God, she loves us more than all the combined saints can love. It is because of her intense love for God and for sinners that Mary has been made the channel of grace, the treasure-house and almoner of the merits of her Son. Hence, St. Peter Damien called her the measure of divine grace; and Blessed Albert the Great invoked her as the measure of Jesus Christ. "She is full of grace," says St. Bernard, "not for herself alone, but for all her children." The words of the angel, "Hail, full of grace," were spoken before the Incarnation: and Mary began to dispense the merits of His Passion before the death of her Son on Calvary. With what joy did her heart go out in benediction to her cousin Elizabeth and her unborn child! From that day to the present, O Blessed Mother of God, how many souls have you enriched by the merits purchased by your Son! For how many poor, weak souls have you obtained strength to

[1] Revelations of St. Bridget. [2] Glories of Mary, p. 53.

conquer their temptations! How many glorious victories the virgins and the martyrs have gained through your powerful assistance! How many who are reigning now with God in heaven would have been lost but for your intercession! And, as Father Faber says, how many are now suffering in hell because they would not have recourse to your mediation![1] Let us always bear in mind that our dear Lord delights to honor His immaculate Mother by granting her petitions, even as He honored her suggestion at the marriage feast at Cana. He knows how ardently she loves Him, how much she suffered in His behalf. No, most Blessed Mother, your Son will never refuse your request, for your petitions will ever be offered for His honor and glory, and for the salvation of those souls for whom He died on Calvary!

The power of Mary's intercession has been wonderfully manifested in our own times in the conversion of Alphonsus Ratisbonne, a prominent Jew, and a stern adversary of the Christian faith. Like Saul of old, this son of Israel breathed naught but threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of Christ. Towards the middle of January, 1842, he went to pay a visit of courtesy to a friend in Rome, the Baron de Bussières, who was an excellent Catholic. They spoke a great deal about religion, and Ratisbonne violently attacked and denounced as superstitious the faith and practices of the

[1] See Introduction to De Montfort.

Church. "Well," said the Baron, "I will propose to you an innocent challenge. Here is a little object which we call the miraculous medal. Will you accept it, and consent to wear it around your neck for some time? You will see that it will produce a revolution in your thoughts. I will also ask you to read every day a short prayer called the *Memorare*. Although Ratisbonne regarded the Baron's proposal as almost absurd, yet he accepted the challenge, thinking that its outcome would furnish a splendid page in the history of his continental tour and prove a convincing argument against the superstitious beliefs of his friend. "If, at that moment," as he related afterwards, "anyone had said to me: 'Alphonsus, in a few days, thou shalt be prostrate on thy knees in a Catholic church, adoring Jesus Christ, thy God and Saviour, and ready to sacrifice for His sake fortune, pleasures, life itself'—if anyone had spoken thus to me, I would have said that he had lost his reason!" Five days after, having mechanically read daily the prayer *Memorare*, as he was passing near the Church of St. Andrew he entered into the sacred edifice, not through any sentiment of devotion, but, as it were, simply to pass the time. It was about midday. All at once he was seized with a marvelous and indescribable emotion; he raised his eyes; his immediate surroundings seemed to have vanished, and he saw before him only the immaculate Virgin Mary, as she is represented on the

miraculous medal, but surrounded with indescribable splendor. With a silent gesture of her maternal hand she invited him to kneel on the pavement of the temple. He did so: and at that moment the beautiful vision disappeared. Overwhelmed by the wonderful experience, he arose another man, like St. Paul when converted by divine grace on the road to Damascus. In an instant the veil was removed from his eyes, his prejudices were entirely overcome, and he now implicitly believed the divine truths which he had hitherto blasphemed. This conversion created a great sensation throughout Europe. On the 31st of January, Alphonsus was baptized and confirmed in the Church of St. Andrew by Cardinal Patrizzi. O Mary, thou didst visit thy cousin Elizabeth; thou hast visited many souls like that of Alphonsus. Visit me also. Bring me nearer to thy Son in this life. that I may live with Him forever in eternity,

THE NATIVITY

DURING the holy season of Advent, the aim of the Church in her sermons and instructions is to prepare us for a worthy celebration of Our Lord's Nativity. She regards this feast as one of the most joyous in her calendar. To manifest her gratitude for our redemption, she decorates her altars with richest ornaments. She clothes her ministers in the garments of joy, and urges them again and again to celebrate the adorable sacrifice of the Mass in thanksgiving for the coming of our Redeemer. And knowing with St. James that "Every best gift and every perfect gift comes from above, coming down from the Father of Lights,"[1] she calls upon her children to raise their hearts to heaven, and praise and bless our great Creator who, in the words of Our Lord to Nicodemus, "So loved the world as to give his only-begotten Son; that whosover believeth in Him may not perish, but may have life everlasting."[2] Hence, the great Apostle of the Gentiles said: "But God, who is rich in mercy, for His exceeding charity, wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together in Christ, by whose grace you are saved."[3] Man,

[1] James i. 17. [2] John iii. 16. [3] Ephesians ii. 4.

prostrated by sin, involved in the rebellion of our first parents, was unable to help himself. God pitied our fallen state, and though we were His enemies by our transgression, in His infinite mercy He sent His adorable Son to take upon Himself the punishment of our guilt and become the ransom of our fallen race. And here we should guard ourselves from an error of which many outside the Church are guilty. They would have us believe that our heavenly Father, in a manner, forced His Son to undertake the painful work of our redemption. This is absolutely false. From eternity the adorable Son of God consented to make atonement for man's transgression. "He was offered," said the Scripture, "because He willed it," [1] and David, in prophetic vision, thus speaks in the person of Christ: "Sacrifice and oblation Thou didst not desire; but Thou hast pierced ears for me. Burnt-offering and sin-offering Thou didst not require; then said I, Behold I come. In the head of the book it is written of me that I should do Thy will; O my God, I have desired it, and Thy law in the midst of my heart." [2] And again the prophet said of Him: "He hath rejoiced as a giant to run the way, His going out is from the end of heaven."[3]

We would naturally suppose that, on appearing among men, the world's Redeemer should be surrounded by all the grandeur and wealth and human comforts which His tender condition

[1] Isaias liii. 7. [2] Ps. xxxix. 7. [3] Ps. xviii. 6.

would require. But such was not the will of His heavenly Father, nor was it the will of Our Lord, who did not desire to be born in the dwelling of sinners, but chose to be alone with His immaculate Mother and the chaste St. Joseph, and to be accompanied by the innocent beasts of the field. Coming to redeem our sinful race, and to enlighten a world "seated in darkness and in the shadow of death," as St. John described it, He began His work of reformation by preaching His first sermon from the pulpit of the manger. It was pride and sensuality that caused the fall of our race; and pride and avarice and sensuality were the great evils of His day, as they are also of the days in which we live. St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, gives us a sad picture of the degraded condition to which pagan Rome had brought itself through these three vices. "The Romans," he said, "when they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, or give Him thanks: but became vain in their thoughts, and their foolish heart was darkened. For professing themselves to be wise they became fools. And they changed the glory of the incorruptible God into the likeness of the image of a corruptible man, and of birds and of four-footed beasts, and of creeping things. Wherefore God gave them up to the desires of their heart, unto uncleanness."[1] What was true of pagan Rome was true of other ancient cities of the world; it is true of our

[1] Romans i. 21–24.

cities to-day—pride, avarice, and sensuality are the ruling gods of our age. It is for this reason Our Lord came in humility, in poverty, and in suffering to condemn the vices that lead most men to their eternal ruin.

Let us now, imitating the shepherds, visit in spirit the stable of Bethlehem and there behold our new-born Saviour in the lowly condition to which His love for us has reduced Him. When Moses came down from the mountain, after conversing forty days and forty nights with God, his face shone with such brilliancy that the people feared to approach and converse with him. He found it necessary to hide his face with a veil. Blessed Lord, Thou hast hidden the glory of Thy divinity under the veil with which Thy Blessed Mother hath clothed Thee, in order that we may approach and gaze upon Thy adorable face and press Thee to our hearts. We thank Thee, O Lord, for thus humbling Thyself, and coming amongst us, and we beseech Thee to grant that one day we may behold Thy face in its unveiled glory in heaven.

Nor should we fail to be mindful of the part that Mary took in the world's redemption. Alas, there are those for whom Jesus died who would rob her of her glory, and, as Father Faber said, "would make her as little a Mary as possible." Thank God, we are not of that number! We recognize thy dignity, sweet Mother—that thou hast been chosen from eternity for the

sublime office of Mother of God—that thou didst willingly consent to cooperate in the work of our redemption. For this we thank thee: for this we praise thee, and call thee blessed among women, and beg of thee to obtain for us that we may never offend thy adorable Son by sin.

As soon as the angels announced to the shepherds the birth of our Redeemer, they sang, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will." We shall now consider how the birth of Our Lord gave glory to His heavenly Father, and, secondly, how it caused peace on earth to men of good will. To understand the condition of the world when our Saviour was born, we must remember that, with the exception of the small land of Judea, the whole world, in the language of the prophet, "sat in darkness and in the shadow of death." As among pagan Romans, bird, and beast, and creeping thing, were universally worshipped instead of the great Creator: and the demon was everywhere adored by those whom God created after His own image and likeness, and whom His divine Providence mercifully fed, strengthened, and sustained. All this the Son of God knew from eternity: and this He knew as man, from the moment that His body and soul were united with the divinity. And, oh, how the adorable Heart of Our Lord longed to make His Father known and loved by the whole human race! How He desired to promote

His honor and glory, and to sacrifice Himself for the establishment of His Father's reign in the hearts of His children! St. John tells us in the first chapter of his Gospel that "He was the true light that enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world." When but a boy, we find Him enlightening the doctors in the Temple, since they were the teachers of His people. He tells us that He came not to seek His own glory, but the glory of His Father in heaven; that He came not to do His own will, but the will of His heavenly Father; that His meat and drink was to do the will of His heavenly Father. And, oh, how earnestly He labored during His mission-life to make His Father better known and loved, and to have that Father's will done on earth as it is in heaven!

The last act of His life on earth was a sublime declaration of the infinite justice and sanctity of His Father. There are those who would blot out hell, and try to console themselves in their sinfulness by the thought that God is too good to punish sin eternally. Ah, they would rob Him of His infinite justice—one of His adorable attributes. Nothing more forcefully proclaims the justice of God than the death on Calvary. When we crush out the life of the serpent that would sting us mortally, we proclaim our dominion over it. God's infinite dominion was proclaimed, and at the same time His justice was satisfied, when life in its grandest type—the life of the Man-God, Jesus Christ—

was taken, and His blood shed, to satisfy for man's rebellion. And how can the sinner who lives and dies in his sin expect to escape the justice of God, which did not spare His adorable Son, but delivered Him up to the death of Calvary?

There was another way in which the birth of Our Lord promoted the glory of God in the highest. Christ came to establish a kingdom. When He stood a prisoner before the Roman governor, Pilate asked Him: "Art Thou a king?" Jesus answered: "I am, but My kingdom is not of this world." He told the Samaritan that His Father was to be worshipped in spirit and in truth, and that His Father desired such worshippers. Yes, Jesus came to establish a kingdom which would last forever, "a city built on a hill, which all nations might behold, which was to be the pillar and ground of truth, and which would lead all men who would be guided by it into the haven of salvation." That guide was His divinely established Church, and the same God who placed the sun in the heavens, to illumine all men with the same light, has established that Church to be our infallible guide, and with that Church He remains all days, even to the end of the world. Has that Church existed from His day? We answer unhesitatingly: It has, and has proved its existence by giving in every age countless multitudes of men and women "who worship Him in spirit and in truth." In early days,

the deserts of the East were peopled with His followers, who fled from the corruption of pagan cities. The many thousands of martyrs who, year after year, in the first ages poured out their blood for love of Jesus and His Church, thus proved themselves His faithful followers. Heroic confessors in every age went forth prepared to suffer any death in order to enlighten barbarous nations and bring them to the Church. Those countries which suffered dire persecutions to maintain His Faith, the armies of our purest and best young men and young women who, year after year, consecrate themselves to labor for Him and for their suffering fellow-members—all give unquestionable proof of their love for their divine Master, and their fidelity to the kingdom He established. And you, who are here present to-day, who have come to adore your Infant Saviour, should rejoice and be glad that you are children of the true Faith and citizens of that kingdom established by Christ.

One more thought connected with the Nativity—the angels sang "Peace on earth to men of good will." The Babe of Bethlehem came to establish peace between His heavenly Father and His rebellious children. That work He accomplished by His death on Calvary, when He satisfied divine justice, led captivity captive, and reconciled heaven with sinful man. Still more, He taught the world the Gospel of truth—to love one another, to pardon our enemies, to do good to those who do evil to us, to regard

but a long distance from Nazareth. It remains standing to-day, and has been converted into an oratory. Near it is a Franciscan monastery where pilgrims are hospitably entertained by the faithful sons of St. Francis. According to St. Luke, Zachary and his wife served God faithfully, walking in all His ways, thereby meriting in a measure the great honor of a personal visit from Jesus and Mary, as well as that of having a son destined by heaven to be the herald of his Redeemer. It was of that son, of that chosen precursor, that the Holy Ghost spoke through the Prophet Jeremias: "The Lord said to me, say not I am a child, for thou shalt go to all to whom I shall send thee, and whatsoever I shall command thee, thou shalt speak. Be not afraid at their presence, for I am with thee, to deliver thee, saith the Lord; And the Lord put forth His hand and touched my mouth, and the Lord said to me, Behold, I have given My words in thy mouth; I have set thee this day over nations and over kingdoms, to root up, to pull down, to waste and destroy, to build and to plant."[1] He was the Angel to prepare the way of the Lord.

John was appointed to denounce the wickedness of the people of his day. He was chosen to brave the very king upon his throne—to rebuke Herod to his face for the terrible crimes of which he was guilty. The son of Zachary came to be as a celestial light, illumining by his

[1] Jeremias i. 7–10.

spotless life the darkness of his age, and preparing for the coming of his divine Master by showing forth to all men a shining example of spotless purity, rigorous mortification and absolute poverty. No wonder Our Lord said of him: "None born of woman is greater than John the Baptist."

As soon as Mary arrived at the house of her cousin, she was the first to pronounce a salutation which filled the soul of Elizabeth with gladness and caused the child in her womb to leap with joy. It was then that Elizabeth, inspired by the Holy Ghost, completed the Angelical Salutation, or "Hail Mary," by crying out: "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb!"[1] It was then that she proclaimed the august and supreme prerogative of the Mother of God, declaring against all heretics who would later deny that exceptional dignity that Mary was the Mother of God. "Whence is this to me" (she cries) "that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?"[2] And again she says: "Blessed art thou that hast believed, because those things shall be accomplished which were spoken to thee by the Lord." And straightway our Blessed Mother gave expression to the pent-up feelings of her immaculate heart in that sublime anthem, the *Magnificat*, abasing herself in the humility of the handmaid, and rendering all glory and homage to her heavenly Father.

[1] Luke i. 42. [2] Luke i. 43.

Never did more perfect praise come from the lips of any of God's creatures than was then uttered by our Blessed Mother. That anthem, spoken ages ago, by the humble Virgin in the privacy of Zachary's house, was taken up by the infant Church of Christ, and for two thousand years has been repeated millions of times each day by rich and poor, by cloistered virgins and consecrated priests, in lowly wayside chapels and in the aisles and sanctuaries of our grandest cathedrals. It was then that Mary uttered her prophecy, which (it is worthy to remark) was fulfilled alone among the children of the Holy Roman Catholic Church: "For behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed, for He that is mighty hath done great things to me, and holy is His name." [1]

And what were the great things which the Lord did for Mary—the great gifts conferred upon her, of which she speaks in her wondrous Canticle? They were her immaculate purity, her absolute sinlessness, her sublime sanctity, which, according to St. Thomas, rendered her in a manner worthy of the dignity of becoming God's Blessed Mother.[2] Yes, O glorious Virgin Mother, truly, and with reason, did you say in your grand *Magnificat* that the Lord had done great things in your behalf! Not only did He have you in His mind from all eternity; not only were you foretold in the

[1] Ibid. i. 48, 49.
[2] St. Thomas Sum. I^{a}, II, XI ad 3, et 1–2^{ae}, LXXXI, 5, iii.

garden of Eden, at Adam's fall, as the Woman whose heel should crush the serpent's head; not only did the Deity hold you up in His omnipotent hands, preserving you from the stain of original sin, but He marvelously enriched you with graces far above and beyond those given to the rest of His creatures.[1]

We read in the Old Testament that when the Ark of the Covenant was brought to the house of Obededom, the Lord blessed the house of Obededom because of its presence.[2] We need not be surprised that the Baptist was sanctified in his mother's womb; that Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost, and that speech was restored to the aged Zachary by the visit of Mary, the living Ark of the Covenant, infinitely more sacred and more holy because of the presence within her of her adorable Son than was the Ark of old. By becoming the Mother of Christ, Mary became Mother of all the members of Christ; and far as the heavens are above the earth, Mary's love for us is above the love of all mothers for their children. The love of our neighbor is included in the love of God. The saints tell us that to love God with our whole heart and soul, mind and strength, embraces the love for all that He loves. But as none loved God as Mary loved Him, so, after God, none loves us as she loves us. She knows how much suffering we caused her Son, she knows how

[1] After St. Ephrem apud Suar. loco, Vol. XVI. 528.
[2] Kings vi. 11.

ardently He desires our salvation, and with burning love she endeavors not only to bring us to Him, but to secure for us all that is necessary for our salvation and perfection. St. Ambrose tells us that when Mary saw her Son dying on Calvary for sinners, she offered herself to His murderers that she also might die for us.[1] Father Nieremberg says: "The love of all other mothers for their children is but a shadow when compared to the love the Mother of God bears to each of us."[2] Next to God, she loves us more than all the combined saints can love. It is because of her intense love for God and for sinners that Mary has been made the channel of grace, the treasure-house and almoner of the merits of her Son. Hence, St. Peter Damien called her the measure of divine grace; and Blessed Albert the Great invoked her as the measure of Jesus Christ. "She is full of grace," says St. Bernard, "not for herself alone, but for all her children." The words of the angel, "Hail, full of grace," were spoken before the Incarnation: and Mary began to dispense the merits of His Passion before the death of her Son on Calvary. With what joy did her heart go out in benediction to her cousin Elizabeth and her unborn child! From that day to the present, O Blessed Mother of God, how many souls have you enriched by the merits purchased by your Son! For how many poor, weak souls have you obtained strength to

[1] Revelations of St. Bridget. [2] Glories of Mary, p. 53.

conquer their temptations! How many glorious victories the virgins and the martyrs have gained through your powerful assistance! How many who are reigning now with God in heaven would have been lost but for your intercession! And, as Father Faber says, how many are now suffering in hell because they would not have recourse to your mediation![1] Let us always bear in mind that our dear Lord delights to honor His immaculate Mother by granting her petitions, even as He honored her suggestion at the marriage feast at Cana. He knows how ardently she loves Him, how much she suffered in His behalf. No, most Blessed Mother, your Son will never refuse your request, for your petitions will ever be offered for His honor and glory, and for the salvation of those souls for whom He died on Calvary!

The power of Mary's intercession has been wonderfully manifested in our own times in the conversion of Alphonsus Ratisbonne, a prominent Jew, and a stern adversary of the Christian faith. Like Saul of old, this son of Israel breathed naught but threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of Christ. Towards the middle of January, 1842, he went to pay a visit of courtesy to a friend in Rome, the Baron de Bussières, who was an excellent Catholic. They spoke a great deal about religion, and Ratisbonne violently attacked and denounced as superstitious the faith and practices of the

[1] See Introduction to De Montfort.

Church. "Well," said the Baron, "I will propose to you an innocent challenge. Here is a little object which we call the miraculous medal. Will you accept it, and consent to wear it around your neck for some time? You will see that it will produce a revolution in your thoughts. I will also ask you to read every day a short prayer called the *Memorare*. Although Ratisbonne regarded the Baron's proposal as almost absurd, yet he accepted the challenge, thinking that its outcome would furnish a splendid page in the history of his continental tour and prove a convincing argument against the superstitious beliefs of his friend. "If, at that moment," as he related afterwards, "anyone had said to me: 'Alphonsus, in a few days, thou shalt be prostrate on thy knees in a Catholic church, adoring Jesus Christ, thy God and Saviour, and ready to sacrifice for His sake fortune, pleasures, life itself'—if anyone had spoken thus to me, I would have said that he had lost his reason!" Five days after, having mechanically read daily the prayer *Memorare*, as he was passing near the Church of St. Andrew he entered into the sacred edifice, not through any sentiment of devotion, but, as it were, simply to pass the time. It was about midday. All at once he was seized with a marvelous and indescribable emotion; he raised his eyes; his immediate surroundings seemed to have vanished, and he saw before him only the immaculate Virgin Mary, as she is represented on the

miraculous medal, but surrounded with indescribable splendor. With a silent gesture of her maternal hand she invited him to kneel on the pavement of the temple. He did so: and at that moment the beautiful vision disappeared. Overwhelmed by the wonderful experience, he arose another man, like St. Paul when converted by divine grace on the road to Damascus. In an instant the veil was removed from his eyes, his prejudices were entirely overcome, and he now implicitly believed the divine truths which he had hitherto blasphemed. This conversion created a great sensation throughout Europe. On the 31st of January, Alphonsus was baptized and confirmed in the Church of St. Andrew by Cardinal Patrizzi. O Mary, thou didst visit thy cousin Elizabeth; thou hast visited many souls like that of Alphonsus. Visit me also. Bring me nearer to thy Son in this life. that I may live with Him forever in eternity,

THE NATIVITY

DURING the holy season of Advent, the aim of the Church in her sermons and instructions is to prepare us for a worthy celebration of Our Lord's Nativity. She regards this feast as one of the most joyous in her calendar. To manifest her gratitude for our redemption, she decorates her altars with richest ornaments. She clothes her ministers in the garments of joy, and urges them again and again to celebrate the adorable sacrifice of the Mass in thanksgiving for the coming of our Redeemer. And knowing with St. James that "Every best gift and every perfect gift comes from above, coming down from the Father of Lights,"[1] she calls upon her children to raise their hearts to heaven, and praise and bless our great Creator who, in the words of Our Lord to Nicodemus, "So loved the world as to give his only-begotten Son; that whosover believeth in Him may not perish, but may have life everlasting."[2] Hence, the great Apostle of the Gentiles said: "But God, who is rich in mercy, for His exceeding charity, wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together in Christ, by whose grace you are saved."[3] Man,

[1] James i. 17. [2] John iii. 16. [3] Ephesians ii. 4.

prostrated by sin, involved in the rebellion of our first parents, was unable to help himself. God pitied our fallen state, and though we were His enemies by our transgression, in His infinite mercy He sent His adorable Son to take upon Himself the punishment of our guilt and become the ransom of our fallen race. And here we should guard ourselves from an error of which many outside the Church are guilty. They would have us believe that our heavenly Father, in a manner, forced His Son to undertake the painful work of our redemption. This is absolutely false. From eternity the adorable Son of God consented to make atonement for man's transgression. "He was offered," said the Scripture, "because He willed it," [1] and David, in prophetic vision, thus speaks in the person of Christ: "Sacrifice and oblation Thou didst not desire; but Thou hast pierced ears for me. Burnt-offering and sin-offering Thou didst not require; then said I, Behold I come. In the head of the book it is written of me that I should do Thy will; O my God, I have desired it, and Thy law in the midst of my heart." [2] And again the prophet said of Him: "He hath rejoiced as a giant to run the way, His going out is from the end of heaven."[3]

We would naturally suppose that, on appearing among men, the world's Redeemer should be surrounded by all the grandeur and wealth and human comforts which His tender condition

[1] Isaias liii. 7. [2] Ps. xxxix. 7. [3] Ps. xviii. 6.

would require. But such was not the will of His heavenly Father, nor was it the will of Our Lord, who did not desire to be born in the dwelling of sinners, but chose to be alone with His immaculate Mother and the chaste St. Joseph, and to be accompanied by the innocent beasts of the field. Coming to redeem our sinful race, and to enlighten a world "seated in darkness and in the shadow of death," as St. John described it, He began His work of reformation by preaching His first sermon from the pulpit of the manger. It was pride and sensuality that caused the fall of our race; and pride and avarice and sensuality were the great evils of His day, as they are also of the days in which we live. St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, gives us a sad picture of the degraded condition to which pagan Rome had brought itself through these three vices. "The Romans," he said, "when they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, or give Him thanks: but became vain in their thoughts, and their foolish heart was darkened. For professing themselves to be wise they became fools. And they changed the glory of the incorruptible God into the likeness of the image of a corruptible man, and of birds and of four-footed beasts, and of creeping things. Wherefore God gave them up to the desires of their heart, unto uncleanness." [1] What was true of pagan Rome was true of other ancient cities of the world; it is true of our

[1] Romans i. 21–24.

cities to-day—pride, avarice, and sensuality are the ruling gods of our age. It is for this reason Our Lord came in humility, in poverty, and in suffering to condemn the vices that lead most men to their eternal ruin.

Let us now, imitating the shepherds, visit in spirit the stable of Bethlehem and there behold our new-born Saviour in the lowly condition to which His love for us has reduced Him. When Moses came down from the mountain, after conversing forty days and forty nights with God, his face shone with such brilliancy that the people feared to approach and converse with him. He found it necessary to hide his face with a veil. Blessed Lord, Thou hast hidden the glory of Thy divinity under the veil with which Thy Blessed Mother hath clothed Thee, in order that we may approach and gaze upon Thy adorable face and press Thee to our hearts. We thank Thee, O Lord, for thus humbling Thyself, and coming amongst us, and we beseech Thee to grant that one day we may behold Thy face in its unveiled glory in heaven.

Nor should we fail to be mindful of the part that Mary took in the world's redemption. Alas, there are those for whom Jesus died who would rob her of her glory, and, as Father Faber said, "would make her as little a Mary as possible." Thank God, we are not of that number! We recognize thy dignity, sweet Mother—that thou hast been chosen from eternity for the

sublime office of Mother of God—that thou didst willingly consent to cooperate in the work of our redemption. For this we thank thee: for this we praise thee, and call thee blessed among women, and beg of thee to obtain for us that we may never offend thy adorable Son by sin.

As soon as the angels announced to the shepherds the birth of our Redeemer, they sang, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will." We shall now consider how the birth of Our Lord gave glory to His heavenly Father, and, secondly, how it caused peace on earth to men of good will. To understand the condition of the world when our Saviour was born, we must remember that, with the exception of the small land of Judea, the whole world, in the language of the prophet, "sat in darkness and in the shadow of death." As among pagan Romans, bird, and beast, and creeping thing, were universally worshipped instead of the great Creator: and the demon was everywhere adored by those whom God created after His own image and likeness, and whom His divine Providence mercifully fed, strengthened, and sustained. All this the Son of God knew from eternity: and this He knew as man, from the moment that His body and soul were united with the divinity. And, oh, how the adorable Heart of Our Lord longed to make His Father known and loved by the whole human race! How He desired to promote

His honor and glory, and to sacrifice Himself for the establishment of His Father's reign in the hearts of His children! St. John tells us in the first chapter of his Gospel that "He was the true light that enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world." When but a boy, we find Him enlightening the doctors in the Temple, since they were the teachers of His people. He tells us that He came not to seek His own glory, but the glory of His Father in heaven; that He came not to do His own will, but the will of His heavenly Father; that His meat and drink was to do the will of His heavenly Father. And, oh, how earnestly He labored during His mission-life to make His Father better known and loved, and to have that Father's will done on earth as it is in heaven!

The last act of His life on earth was a sublime declaration of the infinite justice and sanctity of His Father. There are those who would blot out hell, and try to console themselves in their sinfulness by the thought that God is too good to punish sin eternally. Ah, they would rob Him of His infinite justice—one of His adorable attributes. Nothing more forcefully proclaims the justice of God than the death on Calvary. When we crush out the life of the serpent that would sting us mortally, we proclaim our dominion over it. God's infinite dominion was proclaimed, and at the same time His justice was satisfied, when life in its grandest type—the life of the Man-God, Jesus Christ—

was taken, and His blood shed, to satisfy for man's rebellion. And how can the sinner who lives and dies in his sin expect to escape the justice of God, which did not spare His adorable Son, but delivered Him up to the death of Calvary?

There was another way in which the birth of Our Lord promoted the glory of God in the highest. Christ came to establish a kingdom. When He stood a prisoner before the Roman governor, Pilate asked Him: "Art Thou a king?" Jesus answered: "I am, but My kingdom is not of this world." He told the Samaritan that His Father was to be worshipped in spirit and in truth, and that His Father desired such worshippers. Yes, Jesus came to establish a kingdom which would last forever, "a city built on a hill, which all nations might behold, which was to be the pillar and ground of truth, and which would lead all men who would be guided by it into the haven of salvation." That guide was His divinely established Church, and the same God who placed the sun in the heavens, to illumine all men with the same light, has established that Church to be our infallible guide, and with that Church He remains all days, even to the end of the world. Has that Church existed from His day? We answer unhesitatingly: It has, and has proved its existence by giving in every age countless multitudes of men and women "who worship Him in spirit and in truth." In early days,

the deserts of the East were peopled with His followers, who fled from the corruption of pagan cities. The many thousands of martyrs who, year after year, in the first ages poured out their blood for love of Jesus and His Church, thus proved themselves His faithful followers. Heroic confessors in every age went forth prepared to suffer any death in order to enlighten barbarous nations and bring them to the Church. Those countries which suffered dire persecutions to maintain His Faith, the armies of our purest and best young men and young women who, year after year, consecrate themselves to labor for Him and for their suffering fellow-members—all give unquestionable proof of their love for their divine Master, and their fidelity to the kingdom He established. And you, who are here present to-day, who have come to adore your Infant Saviour, should rejoice and be glad that you are children of the true Faith and citizens of that kingdom established by Christ.

One more thought connected with the Nativity—the angels sang "Peace on earth to men of good will." The Babe of Bethlehem came to establish peace between His heavenly Father and His rebellious children. That work He accomplished by His death on Calvary, when He satisfied divine justice, led captivity captive, and reconciled heaven with sinful man. Still more, He taught the world the Gospel of truth—to love one another, to pardon our enemies, to do good to those who do evil to us, to regard

all men as our brethren, the children of our heavenly Father. And, what is of infinite benefit to poor, sin-burdened souls, He established the tribunal of peace and reconciliation through the confessional. Here to this tribunal may come the poor prodigal who has long strayed away from the peace and happiness of his Father's house. Here the outcast and the fallen, whom the world despises, may come, with Magdalen, and be comforted by words of peace and reconciliation, hearing, like her, the consoling whisper, "Go in peace, thy sins are forgiven thee." To this tribunal may also come the doubting, the fearing, the despairing, who too are comforted, enlightened and cheered on in the narrow path that leads to life. O Blessed Lamb of God, O Child of Bethlehem, what treasures Thou hast brought to our sinful race, what joy, peace and happiness Thou hast given to our troubled souls! May it be ours, O Blessed Master, nobly to walk in Thy footsteps, to be loyal to Thee at all times during our brief span of life here, and to be at length permitted, with Thy saints and angels, to behold Thy face and praise and bless Thee for a happy eternity!

THE PRESENTATION

And after the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they carried Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord.—Luke ii. 22.

St. Cyril, one of the most ardent lovers of our Blessed Lady, seemed to be filled with ecstatic joy in contemplating the mystery of Our Lord's Presentation in the Temple of His Father. The great bishop calls on the daughters of Sion, the daughters of Jerusalem, to rejoice and be glad; "O people of the City of God, lead forth your choirs!" he cries; "exult, ye gates of the walls of Sion, mountains and hills proclaim your gladness, contemplate God present in your midst. Let the heavens rejoice with the earth in chanting the praises of Christ. . . . To-day, glorious things are said of thee, City of God, Jerusalem, City of the great King. To-day, the heavenly Spouse who proceeds from His Virgin Mother as from the bridal chamber, ascends to the Temple."[1] Let us share in the joyful sentiments of St. Cyril, and contemplate in spirit that little group, that earthly trinity, consisting of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph,

[1] St. Cyril, 8th Oration in Purification B. V. M.

as it wends its way from Bethlehem to the Holy City, passing by the tomb of Rachel, "the garden enclosed," and the "sealed fountain" of Solomon. Mary, the spotless Virgin and Mother, is making the journey to the House of God with her adorable Son reposing in her arms, whilst Joseph, her spouse, accompanies her, bearing the doves which are to be offered in sacrifice.

According to some ascetic writers, our travelers were accompanied by a countless[1] multitude of blessed spirits, who gazed in adoring admiration on their Creator and their God, reposing in the arms of a creature. In honor of the immaculate Mother, these blessed spirits strewed flowers in her pathway, and chanted hymns of praise and homage to her Divine Son. At length the illustrious couple, with their angelic attendants, came in sight of the Holy City and the Temple where Mary had spent so many days of her blessed youth. How her heart went up in gratitude to her heavenly Father for all the great things He had done for her since that happy time! Now she is coming to express her gratitude, and to make Him an offering of her adorable Son, the most perfect oblation that heaven could receive. It was because of that divine Presentation that all other sacrifices were rendered acceptable in the sight of heaven. The sacrifices of Abel, Noah, Melchisedec, Abraham, and all of the tribe of Levi, would have been

[1] Divine Life of B. V. by Mary of Agreda, p. 141.

of no value whatever had it not been for the coming sacrifice of the Divine Lamb which Mary offered to-day for the first time in the Temple, and which was to be immolated later upon Mount Calvary.

This presentation of the Infant Messiah by His Virgin Mother contains a profound mystery which we will now endeavor to consider. Among the Jews was a law which prescribed the offering and the consecration to God of the first-born of each family. "Sanctify unto Me," said the Lord, "every first-born that openeth the womb among the children of Israel, as well of men as of beasts, for they are all mine."[1] The end of this law was to cause the chosen people to remember and to understand that they belonged to God, and belonged sovereignly to Him alone. Doubtless, He could have prescribed that each individual should be presented and consecrated exclusively to Him, all things being absolutely and entirely His; but He required only that the first-born should be thus set aside. The first-born, as the chief of the family, represented all its members: hence, the whole family was to consider itself vowed and dedicated in the person of the first-born. Our Lord willed that that law should be accomplished in His own person, but accomplished in a manner infinitely distinctive and essentially proper to Himself alone. Hence, He offered Himself to God through the hands of Mary, not as the

[1] Exodus xiii. 2.

first-born of an ordinary Jewish family, but as the first-born of the great spiritual Christian family of which He was the head. Consequently, in the ceremony of the Presentation, He truly established the foundation of His future Church: since it was then that He offered Himself to God as the head of its mystical body, as the first-born of the faithful, who would become, later on, His members. It was then that He adopted us for His brethren, in offering Himself as our surety.

On entering the majestic House of God, a new joy filled the heart of our Blessed Mother. Holy Simeon, a venerable priest of the Temple, immediately recognized the divinity of her Son,—the promised Messiah, whom he had long trustingly yearned to see, and for whose advent he had prayed for many years. At last beholding his God and his Redeemer in the flesh, and receiving the Divine Child from the arms of His Mother, he blesses God for the fulfilment of His promise, and implores Him now to dismiss His servant in peace, since his eyes have beheld his salvation.[1] Mary's heart rejoiced when she saw the shepherds and the Wise Men adoring her Son in the lowly cave of Bethlehem. To-day she rejoices in seeing Him recognized openly and officially by God's priest in God's Temple. But alas, poor Mother, your joy was overshadowed by a supreme sorrow, for Simeon spoke of a sword that one day should pierce

[1] Luke ii. 30.

your tender, immaculate heart! The shadow was that of the cross, it was a pre-vision of Calvary, now, for the first time, set forth before you, for you are destined, indeed, to be the Mother of the Crucified, the Mother of incomparable sorrows![1]

It might be asked why it was that holy Simeon, rather than the High Priest, had the exceptional happiness of receiving Our Lord in his arms? The Evangelist gives us the reason in these words: "And behold! there was a man in Jerusalem named Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Ghost was in him. And he had received an answer that he should not see death until he had seen the Christ of the Lord."[2] Ah! my brethren, this is a sublime lesson for us all. Why is it that there are so many infidels to-day; why, so many led away by heresy; why, so many slaves of their miserable passions? It is because they are not just; they are not devout; they do not earnestly seek to behold the face of their Saviour. They seek rather to gratify their passions, and feed upon the husks of swine. In the language of St. Paul, their God is their belly, their glory is in their shame, they mind earthly things.[3] Hence, they remain in their darkness, and the light for the revelation of the Gentiles does not shine upon them. Because their hands and their hearts are sullied, they are not worthy to embrace the God of purity.

[1] Luke ii. 35. [2] Luke ii. 25–27. [3] Philipp. iii. 19.

We may make another remark in connection with the office of Simeon in the Presentation. He received the Child from His Mother. Attend to the fact that Mary was the agent through whom the prophet received the Son of God. It is the will of our heavenly Father that, even as the whole human race received the Redeemer through Mary, so each individual is to receive Him through the interposition of the same immaculate Virgin. Holy Simeon, you were the forerunner of countless millions who were to receive the Son of God through the hands of Mary! She conceived Him in her immaculate womb; she brought Him forth for our salvation. To-day, when she would present Him to His heavenly Father, she now offers Him to you, holy Prophet, who art thus made the representative of all devout souls to whom Mary will bring her adorable Son. O sweet and gracious Mother, bring Him to us, give Him to us in our battle through life, but especially give Him to us in that last dread moment when the enemy will wage his fiercest battle against us! In the words of the *Salve Regina*, "After this our exile, show unto us the Blessed Fruit of thy womb, Jesus!"

The Evangelist tells us that, together with holy Simeon, the aged Prophetess Anna had the happiness of beholding Mary's child and recognizing Him as the Saviour of the world. She had lived with her husband seven years from her virginity, and she was a widow until

four score and four years, who departed not from the Temple by fasting and prayers, serving night and day. Now she, at the same hour coming in, praised the Lord and spoke of Him to all that looked for the Redemption of Israel.[1]

The saintly life of the Prophetess Anna fully explains why she was specially privileged on this solemn occasion to behold the face of the infant Messiah. She had lived a virgin up to the time of her marriage; and, after seven years of wedded fidelity, she still lived a chaste life, serving God in His Temple in continual fasting and prayer. It was to recompense that spotless life, that life of self-denial and ardent prayer, that God granted her the happiness of beholding His adorable Son. Then, like our Blessed Mother, her soul magnified the Lord; and she spoke of Him to all that looked for the redemption of Israel. She became the first evangelist in the Holy City, desiring to make known to all the mercy of God who had visited His chosen people. Thus God, in His infinite goodness, was pleased to reward His aged servants by giving them a recognition of the presence of His adorable Son. Here is an important lesson for both old and young. Those who intend to marry are taught by the Prophetess Anna carefully to guard the spotless lily of chastity until their reception of the Holy Sacrament of Matrimony. And should God deprive them later of their

[1] Luke ii. 36.

wedded companion, she instructs them by her example how to serve Him in a chaste and holy life, looking forward to the happy moment when He shall reveal Himself to them in the joys of heaven. How dear to God is a pure heart! Purity is the priceless jewel of the soul: and that precious gift is best obtained and most truly safeguarded by fasting and prayer, together with the frequent use of the Sacraments of Penance and the Blessed Eucharist. We have seen how Holy Simeon and devout Anna were favored by Almighty God on account of their sanctity of life. Here, as in the case of St. Elizabeth, Christ was brought to them through the interposition of Mary. The promise to Simeon by the Holy Ghost—that he should not see death before he had seen the Christ of the Lord—was fulfilled, but it was fulfilled through the direct agency of Mary. It is, in truth, Mary's delight to bring her adorable Son to all who desire to behold Him.

In the lives of the saints we read of many remarkable favors bestowed by our Blessed Mother on her devoted servants. To certain favored clients, from time to time, Mary has given her adorable Son in the form of an infant, that they might lovingly cherish, embrace, and press Him to their hearts. You are all acquainted with the image of St. Anthony of Padua, bearing in his arms the Infant Christ. It was through Mary that Our Lord first appeared bodily to that saint of wonders. The same is recorded

of St. Rose of Lima, who was presented by Mary with her adorable Son. The same, again, of St. Stanislaus Kostka, the boy saint of Poland, who had the happiness of visibly embracing Our Lord as a little child. Among the beatified servants of God belonging to the Order of St. Dominic, there was one who was wonderfully favored in this regard. Blessed Lucy of Narni, whilst yet a mere child, was in the habit of visiting daily a sculptured image in her parish church representing the immaculate Mother holding her Divine Son in her arms. Day by day the little Lucy was seen begging earnestly the Blessed Mother to give her the Divine Child; when lo! a certain lady of the place, to her astonishment, beheld Lucy carrying a lovely child in her arms! The good woman fearing that she would let the child fall, tried to relieve her of her burden, but Lucy bore the babe home in her arms. When her mother beheld her carrying an infant, she was filled with amazement, and tried to take it from her, but Lucy, overwhelmed with bitter grief, seemed on the verge of dying until the mother restored the child to her. She then bore her treasure to her little bed and, placing it there, fell down on her knees to adore it. The report of the strange occurrence was made known in the town of Nari; and at the same time it was noised abroad that the Divine Child had disappeared from the arms of the Virgin's image in the church. Three days and three nights Lucy remained in adora-

tion before her treasure, after which she fell into a quiet slumber; whereat the Infant on her couch vanished from sight, and the Baby Christ appeared once more in the embrace of the marble statue in the church. Here we have the verification of the words of Sacred Writ: "My delights are to be with the children of men.". . . "Suffer the little ones to come unto Me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." In this Fourth Mystery of the Rosary, we behold the consolations which God offers even in this life to those who serve Him faithfully. Happy they who, like holy Simeon and devout Anna, endeavor to render themselves, day by day, more worthy of possessing the incomparable treasure of their souls. Let it be ours often to meditate on the beautiful mystery of the Presentation in the Temple. Often, in spirit, let us accompany our Blessed Lady and St. Joseph, to present the Divine Lamb to His heavenly Father. Often repeat that oblation in the holy sacrifice of the Mass, and adore and praise Him with the angels who accompanied His parents on their journey to the Temple, and who now surround Him in the adorable Mystery of the Altar. Rejoice with Simeon and Anna in the happiness of beholding the "Expectation of Israel." Daily beseech our Blessed Lady to permit you, with holy Simeon, to receive her adorable Son into your loving embrace. But especially, prepare well for that priceless privilege by leading a pure and holy life, like to that of

those ancient servants of God. Frequently receive our Blessed Redeemer in Holy Communion: and each time endeavor to present to Him a heart more pure, more ardent and more inflamed with divine love. Lastly, implore His immaculate Mother, when death comes, as it will in God's appointed time, to bestow upon you her Divine Child, and enable you, with holy Simeon, to exclaim: "Now, O Lord, mayest Thou dismiss Thy servant in peace, for my eyes have beheld Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the sight of all nations, a light to enlighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel."

THE FINDING OF OUR LORD IN THE TEMPLE

And when He was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast. And having fulfilled the days, when they returned, the child Jesus remained in Jerusalem: and His parents knew it not. And thinking that He was in the company, they came a day's journey, and sought Him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance. And not finding Him, they returned into Jerusalem seeking Him. And it came to pass that after three days, they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, hearing them and asking them questions. And all that heard Him were astonished at His wisdom and His answers. And seeing Him, they wondered. And His Mother said to Him: Son, why hast Thou done so to us? Behold, Thy father and I have sought Thee, sorrowing. And He said to them: How is it that you sought Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business? And they understood not the word that He spoke to them. And He went down with them, and came to Nazareth and was subject to them. And His mother kept all these words in her heart.—Luke ii. 41–51.

THIS Gospel passage contains the Fifth Joyful Mystery of our cherished Rosary—the finding of the Child Jesus in the temple. It is a mystery both of sorrow and of joy. Sorrow which wrung the tender heart of our Blessed Mother, and joy which can only be tasted by those who love as Mary loved. We may marvel that He who loved His Mother with an infinite love should

permit her in this instance to suffer as He knew she would suffer: yet, it is only another proof that those whom "God loveth He chasteneth." The closer the saints approach His Sacred Heart, the more they shall be pierced by the thorns which encircle it. The higher He would lead us all in the path of perfection, the more we must resemble the Man of Sorrows, mounting Calvary's height. Day by day he prepares our cross. The braver we become, the heavier it grows: and, in proportion to its weight, the greater shall be our reward for carrying it manfully.

Many beautiful lessons are taught in this Fifth Joyful Mystery; and the first of these is the duty of parents to their children. Mary and Joseph complied faithfully with the law which required them at stated times to visit the Temple. They were ever careful to bring the Child Jesus with them. How sad it is to find so many parents who claim to be Christians failing in a like sacred duty! They are the guardians of the little ones confided to their care, for whom one day they must give a strict account. "How beautiful it is," said Bishop Dwenger of Fort Wayne, "to see the parents leading their little ones onward in the sacred path of duty!" The father of the family is the head of his little kingdom, the home; he is the high priest of its sanctuary. As head, he represents God, and is clothed with authority by the Almighty Himself. He is obliged to rule his family in justice and in charity. He

must be enlightened to know when and how to reprove, when and how to punish. He is to wield the rod of correction, for "he who spares the rod spoils the child"; but he must take heed that the Scripture specifies a rod, not a bludgeon. He is to chastise in charity, because he loves his child, and desires to see it grow up in the fear and love of God. If he use, when needful, the rod of correction, still more must he teach his children by example, like the brave Captain who in person leads his soldiers onward to victory, instead of remaining idly in the camp whilst he dispatches his men to the battlefield. Alas, how often are children allowed by neglectful parents to grow up wayward and ignorant of the essential truths of our holy faith! This is especially true of the rich, among whom many are found who, instead of exciting their offspring to heavenly aspirations, flatter them, foster their vanity, and teach them to value and covet the things of this world rather than the things that are of God. Worse still, there are careless Catholics whose bad example utterly destroys their children's esteem and reverence for the sacred obligations of religion, such as morning and evening prayer, punctual attendance at Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation, frequent approach to the Sacraments, and other sacred duties. Parents should remember the words of our Blessed Lord: "Woe to him by whom scandal cometh; it were better for him that a mill stone were hanged about his

neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should scandalize one of these little ones that believe in Me." The duty of parents is clearly defined by the Catholic Church in a few words. They are to bring up their children in the love and fear of God, to give them good example, and chastise them for their faults. Parents are the first evangelists to their children. From them, their children must early learn to know God and how to serve Him. And as example is ever more powerful than precept, fathers and mothers are strictly bound to present to their children the beautiful model of a Christian life. Mary and Joseph led their Child (God-Man that He was) to the Temple at Jerusalem; and after having performed their sacred duties they returned towards Nazareth. The Divine Child remained behind. St. Thomas teaches us that this was due to no carelessness on the part of the holy couple, but that God willed it, in order to afford Mary and Joseph an opportunity of greater sanctification. Blessed Bede explains that, after having performed their religious duties at stated times in the Temple, the Jews were accustomed to return to their homes in separate companies, the men by one gate of the city, the women by another. Thus, they traveled in segregated sections until they reached the end of the first day's journey, where they could either lodge at an inn or encamp at an appointed spot. The children were not bound by this law of sex, but were free to go

with either their father or their mother. Thus it was that our Blessed Mother supposed the Child Jesus to be with St. Joseph; and St. Joseph, on his part, believed the Boy to be with His mother. At the end of the first day's journey they realized their loss, and no tongue can express the depth of their affliction—especially that of the Virgin Mother. They returned immediately to the Holy City and searched for Him diligently among their kinsfolk and acquaintance. At length, after three days, they found Our Lord among the doctors of the Temple, hearing them and asking them questions.

In acting thus, our Blessed Lord desires to give us a lesson for daily application. This is, that the affairs of God have the first claim upon us—that they outweigh even the dearest and most lawful obligations of flesh and blood. He would teach us that we are in this world principally to glorify our Father in heaven. He would let us know, too, that He, the Son of Mary, was also the Son of God, and that He came down to earth primarily to do the will of His eternal Father. He must needs prepare Himself for His future life of preaching. He must now give some marks of His existence to the doctors of the law. He had already made Himself known to the shepherds, to the Wise Men, to holy Simeon. And now, had those doctors of the Temple been properly impressed by the wonderful wisdom of this unknown Boy, the sublime knowledge of the Law and divine

things which He manifested, they would have been prepared to become His disciples. It is maintained by many that some of those who then heard Him were among the Scribes and learned ones who afterwards recognized His divinity.

After the departure of His parents, and during the three days that He remained separated from them, He was present with these doctors and learned men in the Temple. The Evangelist tells us that He heard them, and asked them questions. What were the subjects that were then and there proposed and discussed? We are led to believe that they concerned the divinity of the Messias, the time of His coming, His character. Among these doctors were Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus and Gamaliel, who must have recognized the divinity of this mysterious Child in His wonderful preaching. They were astounded at the wonderful questions that He proposed, as well as by the wisdom He displayed in replying to their queries.

Our Lord here teaches us that, from early youth, we should labor earnestly to promote the glory of our heavenly Father. To that end we were placed in this world—that we might strive for the establishment of His kingdom, and labor to lead all hearts to a knowledge and love of Him. He would teach us also that in doubts and uncertainties we should consult those divinely appointed to explain to us the Law and the Prophets. "Let us go, Christian children,"

said Bossuet, "to consult the doctors. Let us interrogate them. Let us answer their questions." Let us recognize in this mystery the inauguration of the catechism of the Christian schools. Here, as we see, Jesus did not disdain in His infancy to interrogate His elders in Israel, to answer them and respectfully listen to them—a valuable lesson for all Christian instructors, as well as for all their pupils.

After three days' weary and tearful search, Mary, as we have seen, at length finds her adorable Son in the Temple. We shall never understand the depth of our Blessed Lady's sorrow, on this occasion, or the poignancy of her grief. "None," once said a good woman, "can know what the loss of a child is, except a mother. Once, for three hours, I lost one of my children; and it seemed to me that had I not found it at the end of those three hours I should have died of grief." But never did any earthly mother love her child as Mary loved hers; hence, no other mother ever suffered as Mary suffered.

When she and her holy spouse at last entered the Temple, and saw there her adorable Child, she said to Him: "Son, why hast Thou done so to us? Behold, Thy father and I have sought Thee, sorrowing." And Jesus said to her: "How is it that you sought Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" These are the first words of our Blessed Lord that the Gospel reports. His answers to the doctors we have not learned, nor do we know the questions

that He asked them; but His answer to His Blessed Mother is given us for our instruction. It reveals the primary end of Our Lord's coming to the world: "Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" As if He would say: "You are indeed My mother according to the flesh; but it was to do My eternal Father's will that I came to you and to this world; and My whole life will be spent on earth in order to accomplish that adorable will. My meat and my drink is to do My Father's will. Nor shall I cease to accomplish it until all is consummated on Calvary." Here are lessons for every condition of life. First, for parents, reminding them that they should not interfere in the vocation of their children, when they are called to serve their Creator. Christian parent, does your son aspire to the priesthood or your daughter desire to enter the religious life? Place no obstacle in the way. Rather encourage them, if you see that they have the necessary qualifications, and if you do not depend on them for your daily bread. God has the first right to them, and He made them to love and serve Him alone.

In this Fifth Joyful Mystery of the Rosary, Jesus presents Himself to us as our chief, our model. As our chief, it is our duty to follow Him. As our model, it is our duty to imitate Him. We are placed here in this world not to do the will of man, but the will of our heavenly Father. This is the unique end of our creation.

ST. ALBERT'S COLLEGE LIBRARY

The will of God we should obey, no matter what the world may say or think: no matter how much flesh and blood may rebel or interpose. Let us ever say with our Blessed Lord: "Not my will, O God, but Thine, be done. O Jesus, little Child of Nazareth! notwithstanding Thy tender youth, Thou dost already show to us the sublime end for which Thou didst come amongst us. Thou showest us that no human respect, no love of creatures, however dear, no self-interest, should step between us and the accomplishment of the will of our heavenly Father. In these words which Thou didst address to Thy Virgin Mother, "Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" Thou didst declare to us the mystery of the Incarnation, the consecration of Thyself to the glory of the Father, and our salvation. Thy words are a special instruction to Christian youth whom God calls to serve Him at His altar, to those who are already consecrated to His service, to parents themselves, who should recognize that their children have not only an earthly, but a heavenly parentage. These words contain volumes of wisdom for all Christians, who should often say to themselves and to others: "We are only in this world to serve the Lord and to labor for our salvation."

The Gospel tells us that, after making known the reason of His presence in the Temple at that especial time, Our Lord went down with His parents to Nazareth, "and was subject to them."

Again does Our Lord teach us a sublime lesson in this mystery. After proclaiming publicly His duty to His heavenly Father, and the supreme sovereignty of God over all, He now declares by His submissive action our duty towards those whom God places over us. He recognized the authority of His Blessed Mother, for he knew that that authority came from God. He recognized the legitimate claims of St. Joseph, for He knew that that chosen patriarch was commissioned by His Father to rule over the Holy Family on earth. Therefore, rising up obediently, the Child Jesus went down to Nazareth with them and humbly subjected Himself to them.

The origin of all evil was disobedience. The rebel angels refused to obey, and thereby brought eternal ruin on themselves. Our first parents disobeyed, and brought upon themselves and upon us the curse of heaven. From that sad day to the present, all the rebellions, the schisms, the heresies, all the crimes of proud spirits against God and against the Church, are the result of disobedience. Wretched man, abusing the gift that God has given him—free will—dares to rise up and say, "I will not serve!" "Use free-will properly," says St. Augustine, "and you become saints; abuse it, and you become as demons of hell." Oh, what evils have come to Christendom because of the sin of disobedience! It was necessary, then, that the Son of God should teach the world the

sublime lesson of holy obedience to all authority placed over us by God. One of the greatest evils of our present age is rebellion against legitimate authority. The anarchist would destroy all authority, both human and divine. Free Masonry, in France, would throw off that blessed authority established by Our Lord for the guidance of the souls of men. And here, in this country, how much self-will, disobedience and opposition to the holy will of God and parental authority do we not see! Children are commanded by God to honor their parents at all times. God makes no exception. The authors of our being have a right to that honor, whether they be rich or poor, learned or ignorant. And this duty is certainly sacrificed when children cast aside all obedience to their fathers and mothers. The honor enjoined by God's commandment supposes, on the contrary, that we never fail to pay our parents that debt of love and devotedness which their sacred relationship exacts. How sad it is to witness the disrespect that is shown by some children to their parents! We have known of sons and daughters departing carelessly from home, and failing for years to send any support to their aged parents, or even to write them a letter. The fond mother's heart yearns to hear from the absent ones. It would take only a few moments to give that sorrowing parent joy, it would take only a small sum to relieve an infirm father's necessities. Yet these children cruelly forget both their duty

to their God and to the authors of their being. "Honor thy father and thy mother," says the Almighty, "that thou mayst be long lived in the land, which the Lord thy God will give thee." This, says St. Paul, is the first commandment with a promise, for God promises to give a long and happy life to those children who honor their parents.

O, Blessed Jesus, Thou wouldst teach us in this mystery to obey all whom God places over us. Thou wast obedient to Thy parents; and knowing that God willed the sacrifice of Calvary, Thou wast obedient even to Thy persecutors, to those who bound Thee to the p llar, to those who crowned Thee with thorns. Thou didst carry the cross they placed on Thy shoulders, as long as Thy strength lasted. Yea, Thou wast obedient unto death, even unto the death of the cross! Teach us, Blessed Lord, to walk in Thy footsteps; to follow Thy example; to obey God and His holy Church, no matter what sufferings or persecutions obedience may entail, that, following Thy example here below, we may merit to share in Thy glory hereafter.

The Five Sorrowful Mysteries

The Five Sorrowful Mysteries

THE AGONY OF OUR LORD IN THE GARDEN

Then Jesus came with His disciples into a country place which is called Gethsemani; and said to them: Sit you here till I go yonder and pray; and taking with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, He began to grow sorrowful and to be sad. Then He saith to them: My soul is sorrowful even unto death; stay you here, and watch with Me.—Matt. xxvii. 36.

We now come to the school of Jesus crucified. We come now to study in the book of His sacred Passion. It was in this blessed book that God's greatest servants learned their most salutary lessons; for here they found the most saving truths, the most sublime wisdom. In this school, for nearly two thousand years, heroic souls have been trained to fight on the world's great battlefield in the cause of the Master, Here, weak women and tender virgins have become strong and brave: and triumphing gloriously over their enemies, have won for themselves imperishable crowns. Here have been formed valiant soldiers, noble generals, leaders in the army of God. Here theologians

have acquired their profoundest knowledge of Christian mysteries: and have drunk, as from an unfailing fountain, the greatest truths of mystical theology. The Teacher is our Lord Jesus Christ, and He gives us His first lesson in the garden of Gethsemani. It is the First Sorrowful Mystery of the Rosary.

St. Alphonsus Liguori asks: "Who can deny that, of all devotions, the devotion to the Passion of Jesus Christ is the most useful, the most tender, and the most pleasing to God? It affords the greatest consolation to sinners, and is the most powerful means of enkindling in the heart an ardent love for God." From the Passion and death of Our Lord, all graces and blessings have come to us. Through its serious and prayerful consideration we are brought face to face with the manifestation of God's infinite love for us. We behold in His mangled body the indisputable proof of that love, as well as the evidence of the enormity of our sins, which required so great an atonement. At the foot of the cross, the worst of sinners can find mercy. There they can obtain the grace of true contrition, without which reconciliation with God were impossible. There they are strengthened in their resolutions to suffer all things, even death itself, rather than again crucify the Son of God by returning to their sins. The cross of their Redeemer is their shelter, their protection, their chief ground of confidence, their glory. St. Paul, that ardent

lover of Jesus Christ, cried out: "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the world."

In the institution of the Blessed Sacrament, on the night before His Passion, Our Lord gave us the final and most tender proof of His love. Then it was that He raised His beloved disciples to the sublime dignity of the priesthood, and commanded them to offer the adorable sacrifice of the Mass. Then it was that He fed them with the Bread of Heaven, to support them through the trial which awaited them. After the conclusion of that solemn and touching ceremony, He went forth from the supper chamber with His disciples, and passing over the Valley of Josaphat, and the brook Cedron, ascended the mountainside leading to the Garden of Gethsemani. Bidding the rest of the disciples to wait, He took with Him Peter, James, and John, and entered the depths of Gethsemani, there to prepare Himself for the sacrifice. And presently, fear and sadness came upon Him, and He began to be exceedingly sorrowful. Withdrawing even from the three whom He had chosen, He went a little farther into the shadow of the garden, and falling upon His face, prayed: "Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt."[1] There is a mystery in this abyss of agonizing grief so deep

[1] Matt. xxvi. 39.

that God alone can fathom it. From eternity Christ knew, as God, all that would happen in time; and as man He had seen clearly from the moment of His Incarnation the price He would pay for our redemption; and yet, notwithstanding this clear prevision of His suffering, it was only in the Garden of Gethsemani that, by an act of His divine will, the floodgates of fear and sorrow opened and overwhelmed His soul.

As God, He was able to lay down His life and take it up again. As man, He was prepared to take upon Himself the crimes of a sinful world, and, so laden, to offer Himself as an atoning Victim to the inexorable justice of His heavenly Father. This is what was meant by the chalice which was prepared for Him, and which He was to drink to its very dregs. And what a bitter, revolting chalice this was! It contained the sins of the whole human race, from the beginning until the end of time—all the murders, all the impurities, the sacrileges, the blasphemies, all the idolatries and outrages that ever had been offered, all that ever would be offered to His eternal Father! And for all, He, the innocent Lamb of God, must make atonement! He was to assume the sins of all humanity—to suffer as if He alone were guilty! As St. Paul says: "He put on iniquity as a garment," since He, who is Infinite Sanctity, saw Himself enveloped, defiled, as it were, with the corruption of the whole human race. Thus covered with our

crimes, He presented Himself in fear and trembling before the justice of His heavenly Father. No wonder that His soul was sorrowful even unto death! No wonder that He fell into an agony so frightful that the precious Blood oozed from every pore of His body, and ran in great drops to the ground!

Christ's virginal human nature endured in anticipation all the shame and suffering of His Passion—the betrayal by Judas, the blows, the insults, the abandonment by His trusted disciples, the scourging, the crowning with thorns, the reviling and rejection by His ungrateful people, the painful journey to Calvary, the cruel crucifixion, with its prolonged and unspeakable torments—all were present to Him. In those hours of agonizing prevision were condensed all the sufferings of His many martyrs and confessors, including the dolors of His Blessed Mother, all the heartfelt contrition ever felt by poor penitents for their sins. Added to this was the torturing knowledge that countless souls would be lost, notwithstanding all the excruciating anguish that He was about to endure for their salvation. His soul was torn with unspeakable grief: and a conflict raged between His higher and His lower nature, the one urging Him to accomplish the will of His Father, the other rebelling against the extremity of complete satisfaction demanded by the divine justice. This conflict enables us to understand that agonizing, oft-repeated prayer: "Father, if it be possible,

let this chalice pass from Me." But the bitter cup was not destined to pass; both Father and Son had willed that it should be drained to the dregs. Perhaps the most grievous element in that draught, and the one which weighed most heavily upon the desolate heart of Our Lord, was the withdrawal of all the supporting consolations of the Godhead. Apparently deserted by His Father, His afflicted humanity was left to struggle unaided with the besetting powers of darkness. This separation from His Father is a grief which, because of the limitations of our finite nature, we can never comprehend. Later, on Calvary, He gave expression to it in that heartrending cry: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" [1]

It was then, in Gethsemani's hour of desolation and abandonment, that Jesus sought consolation from His disciples. He, the Comforter of the afflicted, sought the help of His creatures! His lonely, overburdened heart yearned for their sympathy.

But He found them asleep, unmindful of all that He had done for them, and of what He was then enduring for the love of them. Alas, how little can we rely upon human comfort in the hour of affliction! Finding the chosen three asleep ("for their eyes were heavy" says the text), Our Lord returned again to His solitary prayer; thus teaching us that when our souls are plunged in an abyss of sorrow and suffering,

[1] Matt. xvii. 46.

we must look to God alone for relief and strength.

The Evangelist tells us that an angel now descended from heaven to comfort our desolate Lord; and that, through that heavenly visitation, His sacred humanity was invigorated and His courage renewed to continue the dreadful conflict. Ascetic writers still further inform us that the angel represented to the Redeemer the infinite glory which would be given to the Father by His sufferings and death. He placed before Him the countless multitudes who would glorify His mercy forever in heaven. He reminded Him that even the lost would be forced to glorify the divine justice throughout all eternity. Let us in like manner, when we stand face to face with some supreme trial, remember the words of St. Paul: "The sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come."

It was through suffering that God's most illustrious servants attained their highest perfection. The Way of the Cross is the way of salvation, and the humble resignation of our souls into the hands of God in the time of affliction will not only obtain for us strength to drink the chalice even to its dregs, but increase our merits in the kingdom of heaven. Let us learn from Our Lord submissively to accept whatever our heavenly Father may send us, whether it be mental suffering, physical pain, loss of property, the betrayal of friends, the tarnishing of our

good name through the breath of calumny,—whatever it be, let us cry, "Lord, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me"; but let us also add, after the example of Our Lord, in meek resignation, "Nevertheless, not my will, but Thine be done." God knows what is best for our purification and sanctification. He will lead us to everlasting life, if we but follow Him in confidence and holy patience.

There is one lesson especially that Our Lord would teach us by His prayer in the Garden. It is humble perseverance in the same petition. Here we have divine warrant for repeating so often the "Hail Mary" and the "Holy Mary" in the Rosary. The Evangelist tells us that Our Lord repeated the selfsame words, again and again: "Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me." Let us then persevere in our petitions, continually making known our needs, whether temporal or spiritual, to our heavenly Father. It is His wish that we should continue to importune Him, not that He may know our wants, but that we may pay Him the homage of prayer which is His due, and acknowledge that all blessings must come to us through His adorable hands.

There are many instances of the reward of perseverance in prayer. The following was told the author by a priest who (for several years) had been his companion on the missions. "My mother," he said, "was a Catholic, but was unfortunately married out of the Church. My

father was a bigoted Protestant, and soon after her marriage he forbade her the practice of her religion. She consulted her confessor, and he enjoined on her as a penance to recite every day a third part of the Rosary for her husband's conversion. Further, he counselled her to bear patiently with her trials, and faithfully persevere in practicing her religion, no matter what she might have to suffer for it." Years passed on with this worthy woman, and as her children were born to her, she carried them by stealth to her saintly pastor and had them baptized. As soon as they were able to lisp the "Hail Mary," she had them unite with her in saying the Rosary for their father. After five years, she doubled her penance; and after five years more, she offered up daily the fifteen mysteries for that husband's conversion. The change came unexpectedly in the end, as the priest had foretold. The husband became a convert, and lived and died a fervent Catholic and an ardent lover of Our Lady of the Rosary. The mother had the happiness of seeing her son a priest, and her daughter consecrated to the service of God among the Sisters of Loretto.

We have another beautiful example of the power of prayer, accompanied by resignation to the will of God, in the life of the pious wife of Louis XV. of France, Maria Leckzinska of Poland. The court of Louis was most corrupt; but the pious Queen did all in her power to save her children from its evil influences. Her care

compassion for the mangled Lamb of God. On the contrary, the sight of His multiplied wounds seemed to incite them to further and greater outrages. He claimed to be the King of the Jews. We should here recall again that the Romans had a heartfelt scorn and hatred for the Jews, despised them as a conquered people, and delighted to humiliate them. The soldiers of Pilate, therefore, having now in their power the supposed king of a detested nation, cordially embraced the opportunity to manifest, through Him, their unfeigned contempt for the whole race. But a king must wear a crown! 'Twas then that they were inspired by Satan himself to prepare a new and unheard-of instrument of torture. Some of their number hastened to a nearby garden where grew a tree, the branches of which were covered with the enormous sharp-pointed thorns of the Orient. Cutting a sufficient number of these, they wove them into a hideous mimicry of a crown. With taunts and jeers and mocking laughter, they thrust this barbarous insignia of mock royalty upon the sacred head of Our Lord, beating it down upon His gentle brow until the thorns were driven violently in on every side. Then they spat upon Him and struck His blessed face, all bleeding and lacerated as it was: and kneeling before Him, they mockingly saluted Him: "Hail, King of the Jews!" Oh Father in heaven! To what shameful excess of diabolical cruelty have you permitted Your adorable Son to be

subjected! He, whose glory the heaven of heavens cannot contain, He, whose sacred face is to be the joy of the saints and angels for all eternity, is here held up in His extreme affliction to the scorn and mockery of the vilest and lowest of His creatures! Why this heaping up of outrage upon outrage? Why this additional torment and humiliation? Would not the scourging and the crucifixion of the Divine Lamb have sufficed? Alas, this tragic coronation of our adorable King was only another ingredient of that mysterious chalice of expiation which, having freely accepted for our sakes, He humbly consented to drain to the dregs.

It is well known that the human head is one of the most sensitive portions of the body—one of the great nerve-centers of the entire system. A slight scalp wound in that member occasions most excruciating pain. What, then, must have been the sufferings of Jesus, whose sacred head was penetrated with innumerable piercing thorns! Was our Blessed Mother present among the multitude to whom Pilate showed Our Lord thus clad in purple, and wearing His crown of thorns, whence the precious blood ran in streams down His sacred face? And if so, how her tender heart must have been crushed with sorrow as she beheld the insults, the ignominy, and the cruelty thus heaped upon her adorable Son! How her tender heart must have bled as she looked on that holy face, once so fair and beautiful, upon which she had been

wont to gaze with rapture, now so disfigured and defiled with wounds and spittle, and covered with blood! How she must have yearned to remove that cruel crown, or even to wipe away the blood from that beloved face, which she was not permitted to approach!

Having thus crowned Our Lord in mockery, and otherwise outrageously insulted Him, the soldiers took the meek Lamb of God back to Pilate. The Roman governor was struck with compassion at the sight of His lacerated body and head, cf His face, bruised and black with blows and covered with spittle. Believing that even the inveterate hatred of the Jews must be appeased by so touching a picture of human misery, he presented Our Lord before the assembled multitude, saying: "Behold the Man!" He hoped to hear them say: "It is enough; we are satisfied; let Him go!" But, far from being moved with compassion, like wild beasts thirsting for more blood, they cried out with one accord: "Away with Him! Away with Him! Crucify Him! Crucify Him!"

"Behold the Man!" Let us approach in spirit and hear our heavenly Father addressing us in these words of Pilate: "Behold the Man! Behold the condition to which your sins have reduced Him, the excess of suffering which I willed Him to undergo for love of you. He is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, whom I love with a love surpassing the combined love of all human parents, for I love Him

as Myself, with an eternal love—and yet, behold the depth of degradation to which I have allowed Him to descend for love of you! Oh, children of men, when will you realize how great has been My love for you, since it has moved Me to deliver up My only-begotten Son for your salvation? Behold the God-Man in His humiliation and suffering, and begin to understand the enormity of your sins, which have demanded such a fearful expiation! Begin to know the true malice of sin in itself, and comprehend the rigor of divine justice!"

There is another who says to us: "Behold the Man!" 'Tis the Divine Sufferer Himself. He calls us around Him; He turns upon us His adorable face, lacerated with wounds, and with eyes blinded with tears and blood He makes to us this touching address: "Behold, my children, the price I have paid for your salvation. All this I suffer for love of you. It is the baptism of blood wherewith I longed to be baptized. Greater love than this no man hath,—that a man lay down his life for his friends.[1] Yet my love transcends a man's love for his friends—for I die for my enemies. Yet, my children, how many for whom I die will fail to profit by all the sufferings I have endured for them? How many will blaspheme, and again crown with thorns the One who loves them with an infinite love?"

Let us contemplate still another sufferer in

[1] John xv. 13.

that tragic scene, who seems to say to us: "Behold the Man!" It is the dolorous Mother of our Redeemer, who calls us to her side, and says: "Behold my beloved Son, whose sacred wounds reveal how much He loves you! What do I, His sorrowful Mother, ask of you? Only this—that you cease to offend this Divine Victim by sin, that you cease to crucify Him anew, and make a mockery of Him.[1] That for the remainder of your lives you do all in your power to prove yourselves His faithful and loyal children." Blessed Mother, we acknowledge with shame and confusion that we have added to your dolors, and to the sufferings of your adorable Son, by our repeated transgressions. From our hearts we grieve for all our past rebellions against His law, and hope through your intercession to obtain grace never again to offend Him.

Let us here pause for a moment to inquire the special reason why Our Lord in this stage of His passion was permitted to suffer in His sacred head this singularly cruel torture. We know that His bitter chalice of pain and anguish was prepared for Him by His heavenly Father, and that its every drop was measured; but what were the crimes which required the terrible expiation of the crowning with thorns? Why were such unspeakable insults offered to His sacred face—that, in turn, it should be cut with lashes, made livid with blows, and covered with the vile spittle of the rabble? We shall not

[1] Hebrews vi. 6.

have to go far to discover the reason for all this suffering and humiliation. If we reflect that among the most subtle and deadly sins of the human race are pride and self-will, the robbing of God of His glory through sins of the intellect, we shall clearly see that the head more than the heart has sinned against God. It is pride of intellect—abuse of that rich gift given us by God—which prompts us to rebel against His authority. The fall of man, as well as the fall of the angels, was due to self-will. All heresy, all errors, have had their origin in intellectual pride, and all sins of impurity are first conceived in the mind before they defile the heart.[1] It was therefore for these sins that Our Lord meekly submitted to be ignominiously crowned with thorns. O lovers of sensuality, slaves of pride and self-conceit, you who delight in evil thoughts and desires, draw near and look upon the thorn-crowned head of your Redeemer! Behold the penalty exacted by divine justice for the crimes which you commit daily. O sacred head, so cruelly pierced, O adorable face, so bruised, so shamefully defiled! In atonement for our pride and vanity, with Veronica and all Thy pitying saints, we kneel and adore Thee; and we unite with them in endeavoring to make amends by our compassion and our love for the outrages offered to Thee!

The thorn-crowned head of Jesus has ever

[1] James i. 15.

been the subject of the deepest love and veneration of the saints, and the object, as well, of their constant meditation. It was to render her head like unto the thorn-pierced head of her Master that St. Rose of Lima encircled her brows with a band of iron, studded with nails. We behold St. Catherine of Siena, when bidden by Our Lord to choose between a crown of roses and one of thorns, eagerly stretching forth her hand to clasp the thorny crown, and violently placing it upon her head, that thus she might the more perfectly resemble her divine Spouse.[1] We read that Godfrey de Bouillon, after having gained possession of the Holy Land, upon leading his victorious army to Jerusalem, was presented with a crown of gold by his followers, and hailed as King of Jerusalem. But the noble knight, remembering how his Lord and Master had been crowned with thorns in that same blood-stained city, refused the victor's crown of gold, saying: "No, I cannot wear a crown of gold in the place where my Master wore one of thorns."[2] We also read how St. Elizabeth of Hungary, enter ng one day the royal chapel wearing a diadem of pearls and precious stones, beheld before her a picture of our Blessed Lord crowned with thorns. "Oh, my Jesus," she exclaimed, "shall I wear on my guilty head these precious gems, whilst Thou art crowned with thorns for my sake?" And laying aside her diadem, she cried out: "Here am I, O Lord; render me

[1] Hautrive, Vol. XVII. p. 286. [2] Hautrive, ibid. p. 285

like to Thyself! Let me suffer for Thy sake, as Thou hast suffered for love of me."[1]

How many holy souls, indeed, have learned through contemplation of that thorn-crowned head, patience, humility, meekness and love of their Blessed Master! If the world despise us, if we be afflicted with many trials, if the hand of disease be heavy upon us, let us, as members of the Rosary, have recourse to our Redeemer. Let us, gazing upon that sacred face, so disfigured by suffering, learn how to bear our cross, knowing well that whatever is sent us of pain or of humiliation is measured out by the hand of infinite Love, and is intended for our purification and sanctification. "O blessed suffering!" cried St. Peter Alcantara, "that has purchased for me so much glory!"

Could the saints return from heaven to this earth, far from desiring to be free from suffering, far from wishing to be spared humiliation, they would beg of God to increase their pains in order to gain the more merit, and more closely resemble their Blessed Redeemer. It is the duty of all Christians, and more particularly of the members of the Rosary Confraternity, often to meditate upon the thorn-crowned head of Our Lord; and earnestly beg Him through all the suffering that He thus endured, to keep our minds ever free from guilty thoughts, from pride and vain imaginations. Let us, also, implore our Blessed Mother, that

[1] Hautrive, ibid. p. 285.

the image of her Divine Son's sacred wounded Face be deeply imprinted on our hearts. Beseech her, day and night, that we may ever retain a vivid recollection of all Our Lord has done and suffered for us, both to atone for our past offences, and to purchase for us those graces that will aid and conduct us to a happy eternity.

THE CARRYING OF THE CROSS

Then therefore he delivered Him to them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led Him forth. And bearing His own cross He went forth to that place which is called Calvary, but in Hebrew Golgotha.—John xix. 16.

We are called to join in this solemn procession to Calvary, which leads both to death and to victory. The path to Golgotha has been trodden by millions of devout pilgrims from the beginning of Christianity. Tradition tells us that after Our Lord's Ascension, our immaculate Mother, living in Jerusalem, often made the Way of the Cross—that is, she traversed again in sorrow the roads from the hall of Pilate to the blood-stained rock of Calvary. Besides all those who, imitating her example, have made that sorrowful journey on foot, how many devout souls have gone to Jerusalem in spirit, and, with hearts full of contrition for sin and of grateful love for their Redeemer, have travelled by the Via Dolorosa to Calvary's height! Let us follow their example. There is no religious exercise more profitable than this; none more calculated to kindle in our cold hearts the fire of divine love; none more capable of giving us a knowledge

of the enormity of sin, and the terrible penalties which sin has ever merited. Let us ask our Blessed Mother to accompany us on this painful journey, and to obtain for us the fruits which this Fourth Sorrowful Mystery of her most holy Rosary is calculated to produce in the souls of her children.

From his repeated words and actions we can clearly infer that Pontius Pilate did not wish to condemn the Son of God to death. Therefore, after He had been so cruelly scourged, he caused Him to be brought before the multitude, hoping that even their hardened hearts would be touched by His pitiable condition—all covered with wounds and streaming with blood as He was—and that they would then cry out: "It is enough; let the poor Sufferer go free!" But, O God! how hardened are the sensibilities of the depraved human heart! Instead of being moved to pity, the sight of their blood-covered Victim seemed but to increase their rage, and they cried out more vehemently: "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" Pilate asked them, "Shall I crucify your king?" and they answered, "We have no king but Cæsar!"

That single sentence determined the decision of the cowardly and vacillating judge. "If I release this man, I shall incur the enmity of Cæsar," he thought; "therefore, although I know Him to be innocent, I shall condemn Him, that I may retain the Emperor's friendship." Terrible conclusion, born of base human respect!

Pilate, yielding, pronounced the bloody decree: "Take Him away [if you will] and crucify Him, but [he added]: I wash my hands of this deed of blood." Ah, no, Pilate, that empty ceremony of washing your hands will not cleanse your soul from the awful crime wherewith you have stained it. Through all the ages of the world you shall remain the despicable prototype of those temporizing dastards who are willing to sacrifice God and conscience in order to please the world.

As soon as the dread sentence had been pronounced, the Roman soldiers seized Our Lord, who stood trembling and bleeding before Pilate, and tearing off the purple mantle and the crown of thorns, they clothed Him once more with His own garments, violently replacing the thorny crown in mockery of His regal claims. Then they rudely pushed Him down the steps which led to the Praetorium, where the cross prepared by the High Priest was awaiting Him. It was the custom of Eastern tyrants to compel criminals to carry to the place of execution the instrument of their own torture; and as there was no exception in Our Lord's case, despite His extreme exhaustion, the cross was brought forth and placed upon His mangled and bleeding shoulders. Tradition tells us that it was of an enormous size—fifteen feet in length and eight feet across the arms—and of corresponding weight. Jesus, instead of shrinking from it, stretched forth His arms lovingly to receive it. He had fore-

seen that cross from all eternity; He recognized in it not only the instrument of man's salvation, but the instrument of His glory, as well. He therefore embraced it with ardent affection, impatient, in the excess of His love, to begin the dolorous journey to Calvary.

In the life of St. Andrew the Apostle we read that when he saw, at a distance, the cross prepared for him, he cried out: "O good cross, which has received your beauty from the members of my Lord! O cross, long desired, solicitously loved, sought without intermission, receive me from among men, and restore me to my Master; that through thee He may receive me, who through thee hast redeemed me!" But how much more lovingly did Our Lord receive His instrument of torture! He knew that through the cross the gates of heaven were once more to be opened to sinful man; that through it the powers of hell would be overthrown and crushed. He foresaw that it would be a tower of strength to all succeeding generations of His followers, the insignia of their victory. He foresaw that although it was now the emblem of ignominy and derision, it would afterwards become the symbol of power and glory, of honor and everlasting distinction; He foresaw how it would be borne in triumph through all the realms of Christendom, ever surrounded by His faithful and adoring children; that consecrated virgins and mitred prelates would bear it reverently upon their breasts, and kings and

emperors esteem themselves honored to place it on their diadems.

Jesus was accompanied in His painful journey to Calvary by two of the vilest malefactors of the day, these unhappy felons being placed on either side of Him, as if thereby to proclaim Him the most wicked of criminals. "He went forth," says the Evangelist, "bearing His own cross;" but soon His strength failed Him. Exhausted from loss of blood and by the extreme suffering entailed by His countless wounds, Our Lord's footsteps faltered. Three times, tradition tells us, He fell to the ground—each time growing weaker and fainter. But the Roman guards, far from being moved with compassion for His pitiable condition, goaded Him on afresh, urging Him with cruel blows to arise and hasten to the place of execution. Apprehending, at last, that their Victim might expire before they could wreak the full measure of their vengeance upon Him, they compelled Simon the Cyrenean to help Him bear His cross. It was at this moment that the heroic Veronica, overcome with tenderest pity at the sight of Jesus' blood-stained countenance, forced herself through the rabble, regardless of their oaths and imprecations, and presented to Him a towel with which to wipe His sacred face. In token of His gratitude for this mark of sympathy Jesus left Veronica, as a most precious legacy, the image of His adorable visage imprinted upon the linen.

Encouraged by this act of heroism, some devout women, who, more courageous even than His disciples, had followed Our Lord on His painful journey, ventured to draw near to Him and to compassionate His sufferings. How worthy of admiration were these noble women! Whilst the men of their nation were clamoring for His blood, blaspheming Him, and goading Him on to Calvary, they, at least, offered to Jesus the sweet balm of their love and sympathy! It has ever been thus. It is among the devout female sex that the world has ever found the most ardent and courageous lovers of Jesus. These women, unmindful of the scornful opposition of the mob, the ridicule of the Jews and the curses of the high priests, recognized in this meek, abandoned Sufferer, going in the guise of a malefactor to a shameful death, the beloved Son of the Most High God, whose tender ministrations they had all received; and hence they hastened to pay Him the tribute of their sympathetic love and adoration.

But there was another Woman whose grief on that awful occasion far exceeded that of all the others. Draw near and contemplate this blessed, immaculate one—Mary, the Mother of the Saviour! With what words shall we attempt to picture her anguish? Great as the ocean, when its mighty waves are driven mountain-high by the fierce winds of the tempest, was the sorrow which rose and surged over that sinless maternal heart. She had witnessed His

cruel scourging in the house of the Roman governor. She had been present, though at a distance, when, all dripping with His sacred blood, He was brought forth before the multitude by Pilate in a vain endeavor to move them to pity. She had heard the sentence of death pronounced upon the tender Child of her bosom, whom she loved with an intensity known to no other mother before or since; and finally, having learned the road which Jesus would traverse on His way to Calvary, she hastened by a shorter path to meet Him before He reached the place of His execution. Full of an indescribable agony, she awaited His coming, attended by the Beloved Disciple and the faithful Magdalen. Alas! how she shrank and shuddered to hear the frenzied voices of the approaching rabble, as they heaped blasphemies and maledictions upon her gentle Son—the same voices which, six days before, when He made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, had been raised in glad Hosannas! Nearer and nearer came the doleful procession; more and more faint, from excess of suffering, grew the spirit of the sorrowful Mother. At last she saw her adorable Son approach—and oh! how the sight of that beloved face pierced her maternal heart! How bruised! How lacerated! How blood-stained! Ah! if she could but reach Him, how tenderly would she wipe that sacred countenance!—how gladly lift from His mangled shoulders the heavy weight of the cross! But, alas! even these legitimate consolations were

denied her. The soldiers roughly drove her back with curses. They refused to permit her even to touch her Son. Looks of inexpressible anguish passed between the dolorous Mother and her afflicted Child. Well did Jesus know the sorrow of that devoted, immaculate heart! Fain would He have tenderly consoled her then, but that He knew it was the will of His heavenly Father that as Mary was to hereafter share His glory in heaven, so should she now drink deep the chalice of His bitter passion.

We read in the life of St. Catherine of Genoa that, on a certain occasion, inspired by an impulse of divine love, she determined to detach herself from the goods of this world. Having retired, therefore, to her chamber, she collected all her jewels and vain ornaments and put them away, intending never to use them again. The clear knowledge of her own misery and of the great mercy of God caused her to repeat without ceasing, amid tears and sobs: "O Love, is it possible that You would thus anticipate my love by such bounty; and that You have made me comprehend so much of Your goodness, which my tongue can never express!" At that moment Our Lord appeared to her carrying His cross. He was covered with wounds, from which the blood flowed in such abundance that the place where He stood was inundated with it. He regarded Catherine with ineffable tenderness, and said to her: "Behold, my daughter, all this blood was shed on Calvary for you, to

expiate your faults." Touched by the sight of such excessive love, Catherine conceived a bitter hatred for herself. She cried out: "O Love, I shall never sin again! If necessary, I am prepared to confess my sins to the whole world!"

Blessed Humbert, the fifth General of the Order of St. Dominic, relates that one of his religious, after his death, appeared to his companion and told him to look up towards the heavens. The companion, obeying him, beheld a great multitude of men clothed in white, each carrying on his shoulder a cross, and ascending processionally to paradise. The crosses of these white-robed figures appeared beautiful, but seemed to press heavily upon those who carried them. Soon he saw another body of men, also ascending to heaven, but surrounded with greater light than those in the first procession. These carried their crosses in their hands with no apparent fatigue. Still later, he beheld another group of supereminent beauty and brilliancy, and each one of the men, instead of carrying his cross in his hands or on his shoulders, was accompanied by an attendant angel who carried it for him. The religious, astonished at this vision, asked its meaning. He was thus answered: "All that multitude of men are true Christians who obtained salvation through following Jesus Crucified. Those whom you see carrying the cross with difficulty are men who gave themselves to God's service when they were advanced in years. Those who hold the cross in their hands

are men who consecrated themselves to God in their youth; and the last are those who gave themselves to the service of their Maker from their childhood." The author of the Imitation tells us that the Cross is the only true path to heaven; "In the cross is salvation; in the cross is life; in the cross is protection from our enemies; in the cross is eternal sweetness; in the cross is strength of mind; in the cross is joy of spirit; in the cross is the height of virtue; in the cross is the perfection of sanctity." There is no salvation for any one of us except in and by the cross. Let us, then, learn from the example of Christ and His saints, to walk manfully and cheerfully in the Way of the Cross. Let us humbly accept whatever trials or afflictions our heavenly Father may be pleased to send us—whether they be physical sufferings, humiliations, poverty, or the loss of those who are near and dear to us—as so many tokens of His love. Let us cheerfully obey our Blessed Master; and, taking up our cross, walk in the path marked out for us by His bloody footprints. Let us exclaim, amid all our earthly tribulations: "The chalice which my Father has prepared for Me, shall I not drink of it?" Yea, let us daily cry out with that great lover of the cross, St. Paul: "I glory in the cross of Christ, by which the world is crucified to Me, and I to the world!"

THE CRUCIFIXION AND DEATH OF OUR LORD

We now come to consider the last of the Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary, and one of the greatest events in the history of our sad and sinful old world. "This mystery," said Bishop Martin of Paderborn, "contains, accentuates and consummates the other four Sorrowful Mysteries. It renews the Agony in the garden, reopens the wounds of the flagellation; the crown of thorns is replaced on the head of our Redeemer; the cross now bears Him who was forced to drag it to Calvary."[1] As soon as the doleful procession of that first Good Friday attained the summit of the mountain, Our Lord, faint and weary, was given to drink wine mingled with myrrh and gall—a beverage calculated to create a horrible, burning thirst. "But when He had tasted it, He would not drink." Then, laying violent hands upon Jesus, His tormentors roughly tore off His garments, to which the flesh of His lacerated body had adhered, thereby reopening all His wounds and causing the blood to flow afresh. What must have

[1] See Mgr. Martin, Beauties of the Rosary: Fifth Sorrowful Mystery.

been the confusion of our modest Lord, He who is incarnate purity, to be shamelessly exposed for the second time to the derision of that vast multitude! Ah, to what profound depths of humiliation did He not descend for our sakes!

Despoiled of His raiment, He was then rudely thrown upon the cross, and four of His inhuman executioners began the work of nailing Him to it. First, His right hand was fastened to the wood with a rude spike—not a sharp nail, but one blunt and rough, which would mangle and tear the sensitive nerves of the palm of the hand and cause indescribable agony.[1] The left hand was next seized, but as it would not, when extended, reach the hole prepared for it, (because of the violent contraction of the muscles of His wounded right hand), they dragged it thither with such brutal force that the bones of His shoulder were dislocated.[2] His sacred feet were then nailed to the cross in the same inhuman fashion—and the bloody work of the crucifixion was completed!

The soldiers then gathered around our Blessed Lord to place the cross in position. Carrying it to the spot which they dug for it in the rock, instead of lowering it gently, they roughly dropped it into the hole, thereby jarring most painfully the whole sacred body, enlarging the wounds in the blessed hands and feet, and causing the precious blood to flow in streams. His

[1] Note: The nails as shown in fac-similes are rude spikes.
[2] The Rosary, Bishop Gay, Vol. II. p. 114.

malicious enemies now behold their helpless Victim uplifted in His agony. Is there no heart among them to regret or condemn this terrible immolation of the sinless Lamb of God? Ah, no! Far from being moved to pity for the Just One in His extremity of anguish, the hearts of the spectators seem to grow fiercer and more obdurate, if that be possible. No word of compassion falls from their lips, but priests and soldiers, alike, vie with one another in mocking and blaspheming Him.

Draw near now, faithful souls, to the foot of the cross, and gazing upon this hideous spectacle of your dying Redeemer, learn the malice of sin, as well as the inexorable justice of God, which exacts for it so tremendous an expiation. It was our sins rather than the nails which fastened Him to the rough wood of the cross; it was for the secret sins of the world, especially, that He was thus exposed, naked, to the profane gaze of a rude, reviling rabble. Let us approach still nearer, and catch the faint words which fall from the livid lips of our Blessed Lord in His last agony. Does He, like other victims of injustice, proclaim His innocence, and call down the maledictions of heaven upon His persecutors? Ah, no, very different are the sentiments of the meek and forgiving Son of God! He becomes, instead, the advocate of His cruel crucifiers before His heavenly Father. He utters that sublime sentence which should ever find an echo in our hearts and influence

our conduct toward those who have done evil to us: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!"

Of the two robbers who were crucified with Him, one was touched by this evidence of divine patience and gentleness, by this tender prayer for mercy for His enemies; and, already believing in Christ's innocence, by a special grace Dismas, the thief, received faith to believe also in His divinity. Upbraiding his guilty companion for blaspheming Jesus, he turned to the Master and begged Him to be mindful of him in His kingdom. In return for this dying act of faith he had the ineffable happiness of hearing from Our Lord's lips these consoling words: "This day shalt thou be with Me in paradise."

In this merciful promise there are grounds of hope for the greatest sinners of the world. The penitent thief, after a life of sin, finds mercy in his dying moments; yet even here we behold a contrast, a presentation of eternal issues calculated to strike the sinner with fear and trembling. Of two criminals in like danger of death and damnation, only one was saved! Reflect well upon this consideration. Both men had the same Redeemer, dying for the world's salvation, in their midst. The precious Blood of Jesus was flowing close to them, ready to ransom their souls. Both had before them the same example of divine patience; both were offered the grace of the Mediator to do penance—yet one is forever lost; the other

saved for all eternity. Have you not, then, O sinner of to-day! less reason to hope than to fear? I exhort you, if you desire to secure yourself in so important an affair, hasten your conversion. Do immediately what the good thief did in his extremity, lest his salvation, which was a miracle of grace, should prove the rock of your destruction, the ordinary chastisement of sinners who forget God during their lives.[1]

Up to this point, we have said little of the part our Blessed Mother took in Calvary's tragedy. Present, as she was, during the fearful fastening of her Son to the tree of shame,[2] she heard the sound of the hammer driving the rude nails into His sacred hands and feet. Alas! those violent strokes were as so many cruel blows upon her immaculate heart. She saw the soldiers raise the cross and drop it roughly into position; she heard the exultant shouts of the multitude as her Son was thus elevated above them,—the blasphemies that were then uttered by the High Priest and the rabble. As soon as she saw the soldiers withdraw from the cross, she hastened with her companions to take her position at its foot.

With eyes streaming with tears, she gazes upon the agonized face of her dying Son—upon His brow drenched with blood from the thorny crown, upon His eyes dim with the excess of His pain, upon His pale lips, parched with the con-

[1] Nouet's Meditations, Wednesday in Passion Week.
[2] Hautrive, Vol. XVI. p. 361.

suming thirst attendant on His great loss of blood. She would give a thousand lives, did she possess them, for the privilege of putting to His lips a draught of cold water to relieve His fevered mouth and throat; but even this poor consolation is denied her. Jesus knows full well the agonizing desires of her devoted heart; and from His cross He casts upon her a look of tender pity. It is then that, commending her to the care of St. John, He leaves her as a precious legacy to all His followers until the end of time. In that supreme moment she becomes, in truth, our Mother, our mediator, our intercessor with her Divine Son.

Soon after this, Our Lord gives expression to the bitterest anguish of His heart in that piteous cry: "My God! My God! why hast Thou forsaken me?" These appealing words reveal to us the secret of His intense agony in the Garden of Gethsemani, of His torments on the cross. His keenest suffering is caused by His apparent abandonment by His beloved Father. Unconsoled and unsupported, He is left alone to battle with the powers of earth and hell, at the mercy of the spirits of darkness, only such aid being rendered as is necessary to prolong His life until His sacrifice shall reach its supreme consummation in death. This is that poignant anguish which draws forth the bitter cry: "My God! My God! why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

Now Nature, less insensible than man, com-

mences to manifest her horror at the spectacle of a God crucified by His creatures. The sun begins to withdraw its light from the heavens; an awe-inspiring pall of darkness settles down upon that blood-stained city. Violent convulsions of the earth are felt; Calvary's rocks are rent; the veil of the Temple, which hides the Holy of Holies from the gaze of the people, is torn asunder, and the dead arise from their graves and appear to many. The vast multitude on Calvary, who have gathered there to gloat over the death agony of their innocent Victim, hasten to leave that dreadful scene. Hushed now are the blasphemies, the imprecations, the mockeries of the rabble! In terror and confusion, they flee over the quaking ground through a darkness which has now grown intense and awful. A horrible fear assails them. May we not believe that they then began to realize the enormity of their crime, and (feeling that they were indeed guilty of deicide,) were moved to exclaim with Longinus: "Indeed, this was the Son of God!" [1] Only a few remained to witness the end of the great tragedy. And now the afflicted Mother and her faithful attendants draw nearer to the cross whereon hangs the world's Redeemer. Again is heard the voice of the dying Saviour: "All is consummated."

Having commended His soul to His heavenly Father, He yielded up His spirit. A little later, the centurion pierced Our Lord's dead

[1] Mark xv. 39.

body with a lance, and from the wound there issued forth water and blood, thus testifying that the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the ever-flowing fountain of divine love and mercy, was opened to all mankind. Still later, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus took down His sacred body and placed it for a few moments in the arms of His afflicted Mother. Poor Mother! with what looks of silent agony you gazed on the mangled body of your adorable Son! Removing the cruel crown of thorns from His blessed brow, Mary placed it, with the sacred nails, in her heaving bosom, close to her immaculate heart. Not long after, the dead Christ was removed by Joseph of Arimathea and laid "in his own new monument, which he had hewed out in a rock." [1] A great stone was rolled to the door of the sepulchre, and Joseph went his way, leaving Mary Magdalen and the other Mary sitting beside the tomb. Thus ends the Fifth Sorrowful Mystery. Here, at the door of Christ's sepulchre, let us kneel with these holy women and ask of our crucified Lord the grace to bear our crosses unto death in meek resignation to His adorable will. Let us resolve to be ever faithful to His teachings and commandments—to follow closely in His footsteps up the blood-stained mountain of self-sacrifice, and, having died with Him upon Golgotha, merit one day to rise with Him to a happy and glorious eternity.

[1] Matt. xxvii. 60.

The Five Glorious Mysteries

The Five Glorious Mysteries

THE RESURRECTION

He is risen; He is not here!—Mark xvi. 6.

WHAT transports of unalloyed joy arise within the devout Christian soul when contemplating the glorious mystery of Our Lord's Resurrection! How intense the spiritual delight of the faithful members of the Rosary Confraternity in meditating on the beauty, power and majesty of their risen Redeemer! They have followed Him in spirit from the moment of His descent from heaven into the Virgin's womb, on the morning of the Incarnation. They have gazed in admiring rapture on the beauty of the human soul of Our Lord, the most perfect work of the Adorable Trinity. They beheld that peerless soul united with the most pure and perfect body formed by the Holy Ghost, not of the slime of the earth, not of the sin-corrupted flesh of Adam, but of the most pure blood of the immaculate heart of Mary. They saw how in that instant the heavens bowed down to the earth, the Word was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us; the Son of God

became the true Son of a Virgin Mother. Our dear Rosarians have prayerfully followed Our Lord through each mystery of His sacred life, from the poverty and sufferings of the manger of Bethlehem to the agony and ignominy of His death on Calvary. They have gazed in bitter sorrow of spirit upon the livid face of the Divine Victim, when His beautiful soul separated itself from His mangled body; and they have wept with Mary and the disciples when that adorable body was laid in the silent tomb. But they well know that His mighty soul yet lives; they firmly believe that both body and soul are still united with the Divinity, and that the seed of immortal life is there, soon to burst forth from the sepulchre in the glory of the Resurrection.

Before proceeding further to meditate upon the details of this marvelous miracle, let us pause to consider for a few moments the joy of our Mother, the Church, on this glorious festival. How supreme the change that has taken place since the dolor and darkness of Good Friday! Then, the agonized Spouse of Christ was submerged in an ocean of bitter sorrow. Her altars were denuded; her ministers were clothed in the sable garments of mourning; a wail of grief went forth from her bosom, piercing the highest heaven. Behold the glorious transformation of Easter Sunday! Our weeping Mother has dried her tears and hushed her sighs of grief. Her priests appear in robes of white

and gold; her altars are decked with lovely flowers and flaming lights; her organs peal forth exultant paeans, and, in a very rapture of gladness, she calls upon heaven and earth to join in her song of triumph, repeating again and again her thrilling "Alleluias." Nor is the Mater Dolorosa forgotten in those joyful canticles of Easter. Tenderly mindful of the sorrows of Mary, the Church cries to her to rejoice in the golden dawn of the Resurrection: "Regina cœli, lætare," (she chants). "O Queen of Heaven! rejoice, because He whom thou didst merit to bear, hath risen, as He said. Rejoice and be glad, O Virgin Mary! because He is truly risen from the dead!" Yes, Blessed Mother, rejoice and be glad! No longer have hell and Satan power over your adorable Son. He lives and reigns forever, the immortal Conquerer of sin and death, and one day, when your grand work for God and His Church is completed, you shall share everlastingly in the joys of His kingdom!

O sweet and gentle Mother! recalling your profound emotions immediately after the death of your Divine Son, assist us to dwell awhile with you on the action of His adorable soul after its separation from the flesh upon Calvary's cross. You remember the promise the dying Redeemer made to the poor penitent thief that he would be with Him that day in Paradise.[1] That pledge was faithfully fulfilled. For lo! the moment the soul of Our Lord passed from

[1] Luke xxiii. 43.

its blessed body, it descended into hell, as the Apostles' Creed puts it; that is, it descended not into the hell of the damned, but into Limbo, the prison of the patriarchs, where all the just were confined who had died during 4000 years. What a vast multitude of elect souls was there, waiting, watching, praying for the long-desired moment that had at last arrived! O what joy to those poor captives to behold the glory and beauty of the soul of their Redeemer, which transformed their prison into a paradise of delights! How fervently they praised and thanked Him for all He had done and suffered in order to give them release from their place of probation!

But the hour draws near when that glorified soul of Our Lord must return to the sepulchre in the Garden, and awaking His adorable body, give it to share in the glory of the Resurrection. What tongue or pen of men or angels can describe the rapturous reunion of the body and soul of Our Lord on that blissful Easter morn! Lord Jesus, may our bodies and souls experience a measure of that unutterable joy when they meet again on the last day, the day of our resurrection! Grant, dear Lord, that then there may be no terrible recrimination between flesh and spirit, each accusing the other of its eternal ruin; but rather a mutual joyous congratulation that soul and body united during life in accomplishing the glorious work of their salvation.

On that first Easter Day, the moment the soul of Our Lord returned to the body, it awakened it from the sleep of death and at once filled it with the infinite happiness of the Beatific Vision, giving it all the properties of glorified bodies in the most exalted and perfect degree. Resplendent to behold in its clarity and incorruptibility, invested with subtility and agility, the glorified body of Our Lord passed swiftly through the granite of the sealed tomb. He did not need to await the rolling back of the stone from the mouth of the sepulchre, which occurred later, to convince the guards of the divinity of the crucified Lord, and to acquaint the devout women and His disciples with the fact that He was no longer there, inasmuch as they could behold the place where they had laid Him.

It is the opinion of many theologians [1] that the soul of Our Lord appeared to His Blessed Mother long before the hour of His Resurrection, changing her sorrow into intense joy, and giving her in anticipation a share of the glory and happiness that awaited her in heaven. How sweet and consoling must have been the converse of Our Lord with His Blessed Mother! How she must have thanked and congratulated Him for choosing her to be His companion in the sublime work of the world's redemption—and for having vouchsafed her a share in His manifold sufferings and sorrows! And how Jesus, in turn, must

[1] Vide St. Anselm, De excellentia B. V. M. Also St. Bernardine Ser. 46. Also St. Gregory Nicom. In Stae Mariae Orat. 9.

have thanked His Blessed Mother, and praised and blessed her for all she did and suffered for Him from the moment of His Incarnation to His expiration on the cross! Let us try to picture to ourselves the overflowing rapture of Mary's immaculate Heart when she beheld, later, the glorified body of her divine Son. She did not go with the devout women when (as the Evangelist tells us) they went very early in the morning to anoint the body of Christ. She well knew that it had no need of the embalming spices or unguents, since it was not destined to molder in the grave. She did not go to visit the tomb on Easter morn with the weeping Magdalen, for she was well aware that the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea was vacant of its divine Tenant. Already her adorable Son had visited and consoled her. And with what ecstatic joy must she have gazed on those hands and feet, lately so livid and lacerated, now shining as if adorned with dazzling jewels; on that glorified body, so horribly torn by the scourges, now resplendently arrayed with heavenly vesture; on that sacred face, once clouded by blood and bruises, now more brilliant than ten thousand suns, thence diffusing the light of the Lamb, which shall fill the New Jerusalem with ineffable delight, from everlasting to everlasting!

Later on, in that first most wonderful Paschal time, when Our Lord appeared to Magdalen, to the other devout women, to Peter, and to the rest of the disciples, and when He saw that they

feared and wavered, He said to them: "Why are you troubled, and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? See My hands and feet—realize that it is I, Myself. Handle and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as you see Me to have." He permitted that Thomas should doubt, in order that a more convincing proof of His resurrection might be given, by permitting the incredulous disciple to put his hand in the marks of the wounds still existing in His glorified body. When the disciples saw that it was indeed the Lord, their sorrow was changed into unspeakable joy. They hailed with delight their well-beloved Master, who, having triumphed over death and hell, appears once more among them to console and comfort them, and lovingly to pardon their past defections. After conversing with them for forty days, He ascended gloriously into heaven, taking with Him the trophies of His victory—the vast multitude of ransomed souls who were to share through Him and with Him in the glory of His eternal kingdom.

We have spoken to you, dear Rosarians, of the body and soul of our risen Redeemer. But shall we venture to dwell upon the awful subject of His divinity? We know that the adorable Son of God was with the Father from all eternity; and we firmly believe that He did not leave the Father when He descended upon the earth,[1] but that clothing Himself with our humanity, He rendered all its actions of infinite value. He

[1] St. Thomas' Hymn, "Verbum supernum prodiens."

concealed Himself from the eyes of the world in the lowliness and poverty of the manger; but, occasionally, during His mortal career He permitted His divinity to shine forth in His stupendous works. He gave a glimpse of it, though still partially veiled, to His chosen disciples on Mount Thabor. He concealed it during the tragedy of Calvary, for there, for our instruction and example, His poor suffering humanity was forced to cry out in bitter anguish: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" But now, at last, all is consummated. The work He came to do is accomplished. He has completed the work His Father gave Him to do. Man has been redeemed; death and hell are conquered, and Jesus seems to say to us to-day, as He said to the disciples in Emmaus: "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and so enter into His glory?"

But apart from the joy given to Christians in the mystery of the Resurrection, there are other solid causes of rejoicing which we will now briefly consider. The Resurrection was the test miracle of the divinity of our Lord. He frequently adduced it in His public life as the strongest proof that He was God. When He drove the money-changers out of His Father's house, the Jews wanted to know by what authority He did it. He answered: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I shall raise it up again. Put Me to death, and in three days I shall rise again." Repeatedly He said to

His disciples: "Behold! we go up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man shall be delivered into the hands of His enemies. They will scourge Him and put Him to death, and the third day He shall rise again." When that obdurate people asked of Him a sign, a proof that He was the Son of God, He said, "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh a sign, and no sign shall be given it, except the sign of Jonas the prophet; for as Jonas was in the belly of the whale three days and three nights, so shall it be with the Son of Man. He shall be in the bowels of the earth three days and three nights." The Jews well knew of His repeated prophecy, and therefore they did all in their power to defeat its accomplishment. Hence, the Resurrection of of the crucified Saviour is the strongest proof of the divinity of our Faith, as well as the divinity of Jesus Christ. "If Christ be not risen, our Faith is in vain," says St. Paul. And even as from the sleeping Adam his virgin spouse was formed, and given to him for a companion, so, say the Fathers, from the sleeping Christ and from the empty tomb the Church came forth in all her virginal beauty, to be forevermore the Spouse of Jesus Christ. It was in this faith of the Resurrection that St. Peter performed his first miracle. "Know this," he said, "that it is in the name of Jesus Christ whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, in His name this man stands before you whole!" It was in the name of the crucified

and risen Saviour that all the miracles wrought by the Apostles were performed. In the faith of the Resurrection they went forth joyously to labor, to suffer and to die. Seventeen millions of martyrs attested by their blood their faith in the Resurrection. And all that has been done by Christianity for the civilization of the world, for the conversion of nations, for the liberation of slaves, for the elevation of woman, has been accomplished through the faith in the Resurrection.

Besides these general motives for rejoicing in the Resurrection, dear Rosarians, we have each a special one to gladden us. Christ's Resurrection is the model and the pledge of your resurrection and mine, provided we be found at the last day faithful to our Master. Among all the nations of the earth there has ever existed some sort of belief in a future state. Hence their care for the dead. Hence the Indians' devotion to the remains of their departed, and their belief in the happy hunting-ground. Hence the funeral pyre, the cremating of the dead, and the gathering of their ashes into urns by the Greeks and Romans. Hence the embalming of bodies among the Egyptians, and the erection of the Pyramids, as the enduring monuments of their kings. In the Old Law, we read of the care of Abraham for the grave of Sarah, the desires of Jacob and Joseph to be interred with their Fathers—all in the hope of a glorious resurrection. Holy Job said: "For I know

that my Redeemer liveth, and in the last day I shall rise out of the earth, and I shall be clothed again with my skin, and in my flesh I shall see my God, Whom I shall myself see, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. This, my hope, is laid up in my bosom."[1] "Behold, you who moulder in the dust," said Isaiah, addressing the dead, "you shall be born again, for the dew which falls on you is vivifying dew." In a sublime allegory, Ezechiel contemplates a vast plain filled with the dried bones of the dead, which at the preaching of the prophet gradually reentered their mortal bodies, and, beginning to move, being covered with flesh and skin, at last arose, a mighty army of the Lord. Then cried the Almighty through the prophet: "When ye shall see these things come to pass, know that I am the Lord!"[2]

Daniel speaks of the vast multitude who sleep in the earth. All will arise, he says, "some unto life everlasting, and others unto reproach, to see it always. But they that are learned shall shine as the brightness of the firmament."[3] "Behold," says St. Paul, "I tell you a great mystery; we shall all rise again, but we shall not all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall rise again incorruptible, and this mortal shall put on immortality."[4]

[1] Job. xix. 25.
[2] Ezechiel xxx. 1 et cet.
[3] Daniel xii. 2, 3.
[4] 1 Cor. xv. 51.

It is a dogma of our Faith that all shall arise again. Our Apostles' Creed declares: "I believe in the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting." But, alas, Faith does not promise to all a glorious resurrection. Those who persevere in a life of sin, who persistently despise here below the Church and her teachings, can never hope for a blessed immortality. "Be not deceived," says St. Paul to the Galatians, "God is not mocked; for what things a man sow, the same shall he reap; for he that soweth in the flesh, of the flesh shall reap corruption; but he that soweth in the spirit, of the spirit shall reap life everlasting."[1] Again, he says: "They that are Christ's have crucified their flesh, with its vices and concupiscences." In another place he declares: "Brethren, we are debtors, not to live according to the flesh, for if we live according to the flesh we shall die; but if, by the spirit, we mortify the deeds of the flesh we shall live."[2] Divine Faith, therefore, teaches us that they who continue obstinate enemies of God until the end, will remain His enemies for all eternity. To them we can promise no Easter joy, no glorious resurrection of the body.

You are aware that it is the ardent desire of the Church that all her children who have come to the use of reason should approach the Sacraments during this holy season. For this, her Lenten service: for this, her sermons and

[1] Gal. vi. 7. [2] Rom. viii. 13,

instructions. She not only desires this, but with all her divine authority she commands it, threatening with awful punishment those who will not comply with her precept. She declares that they are cut off from the body of the Faithful even as the branch is cut off from the vine. And Jesus tells us Himself that the fruitless branch cut from the vine is dead, and only fit to be cast into the fire. Have you all proved your obedience to Jesus Christ by obeying His Church, and approaching the Sacraments with proper dispositions during the Paschal time which she appoints? We know the words of Jesus Christ: "He who will not hear the Church, let him be considered as the heathen and the publican." And, again, he declares: "Except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you."[1] That is to say, you may have mere animal life, the life of the beast, the life of the infidel, the life of the lost soul (for the soul must live forever), but you will not have that spiritual, that divine life, which alone comes from our union with God. In the same chapter, Jesus says: "I am the living Bread that comes down from heaven, that if any man eat of this Bread he may not die, but live forever, and the Bread that I will give you is my flesh for the life of the world. Except you eat of this Bread, you shall not have life in you."

How sad it is to realize that, notwithstanding

[1] John vi. 54.

all that Jesus has done and suffered to unite Himself to us in Holy Communion, there are Catholics who, refusing the life-giving Sacraments, continue to the end His mortal enemies! Let us beg our risen Lord to pity these ungrateful souls and draw them to His Sacred Heart. And, still more, let me implore all the members of the Rosary to be faithful in their compliance with the important precept of the Easter duty.

And, now, a word in conclusion to those who have truly arisen with Our Lord and Saviour by having made a good confession and Communion. Father Chevassu tells us that there are three typical resurrections mentioned in Holy Writ: The resurrection of Samuel, of Lazarus, and of Our Lord. Samuel rose but for a moment, and sank down again, questioning Saul and the witch of Endor why they had disturbed him. His was not the real resurrection. It was a phantom resurrection. Lazarus truly rose from the dead, but he came out of the sepulchre in the same sluggish flesh that had already generated the seeds of corruption: and hence death claimed him a second time. Jesus Christ died but once, "and death," says St. Paul, "had no longer dominion over Him." [1] He rose to live the divine life of immortality. Behold, here, the model of our spiritual resurrection! Some Catholics rise out of their sins for a moment only, and this generally at Easter, but, like Samuel, they soon sink back again into

[1] Rom. vi. 9.

their deadly slumber. Others remain firm for a time, but gradually yield. Let us, at least, beloved Rosarians, strive to imitate our Blessed Master. He rose from the dead never to die again. He was never seen in the company of His enemies after His Resurrection. As He shunned them in those blessed days, and appeared only to His disciples, so we, having arisen from the grave of sin, should avoid all evil associations and consort only with the friends of God.

This is the sublime lesson which we should learn from this glorious festival. Like our risen Lord, let us, as St. Paul tells us, walk in the newness of life, that when Christ appears we may also appear with Him in glory. Fleeing resolutely from the occasions of sin as from the face of the serpent, fortified by fervent prayer and the holy Sacraments, let us also gain a glorious victory for God over His enemies and ours. Let us persevere to the end in divine grace; and, following, like true disciples, in the footprints of Our Lord, we may confidently hope to rise with Him to a new life and rejoice with Him and His Blessed Mother in the abode of the saints for a happy eternity.

THE ASCENSION OF OUR LORD INTO HEAVEN

And He led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up His hands, He blessed them. And it came to pass, whilst He blessed them, He departed from them and was carried up to heaven. And they, adoring, went back into Jerusalem with great joy.—Luke xxiv. 50.

THE Second Glorious Mystery makes known to us how our Blessed Lord, having appeared to His disciples on many occasions after His Resurrection, ascended at last in their sight to heaven. It was meet, in order to elevate their hearts to a desire of the blessed life beyond the grave, that He should show them a part of that glory which is His from all eternity. Oh, how consoling it is to the Christian soul to meditate on the happiness of heaven: to know that, after this life of peril and trial, of suffering and sorrow, there is prepared for us through the Passion and death of our Lord and Saviour, a glorious home, where we shall rejoice with Him in never-ending happiness! Were it not for this divine Faith, which supports us in the midst of our daily troubles, how many would sink into dark despair and curse the hour that

they came into life! But when we realize, in the light of Faith, that our true home is in our Father's kingdom, beyond the grave, when we firmly believe that He hath prepared a place for us there, in one of His many mansions, an abode of everlasting happiness, in the blissful company of His saints and angels, where we will see God face to face—then, indeed, we can cheerfully take up our daily crosses and patiently bear them onward, in the glad expectation of that revelation of His glory, of that coming of His kingdom, of that eternal rest in the bosom of our God. Before the clear and explicit teachings of our Blessed Lord concerning the life beyond the grave mankind entertained very confused conceptions of the joys of heaven. It was His own divine lips that told us of the many mansions in His Father's kingdom. It was He who declared that He departed from earth in order to prepare a place for us above, where, as He said, we should be with Him forever and share in His glory, where we should even eat and drink at His table—at the marriage feast of the Lamb. It was He who declared that the blessed in heaven should be as the angels, pure and spiritual, neither marrying nor giving in marriage; and that, with the angels, they should see the face of His Father and thereby enjoy eternal happiness. Before the coming of Christ the ancient patriarchs, it is true, had some knowledge of a life beyond the grave. They expected vaguely to enjoy a lasting happiness in a future

existence. Holy Job has said: "For I know that my Redeemer liveth; . . . that in my flesh I shall see my God, whom I myself shall see and my eyes shall behold and not another. This my hope is laid up in my bosom." [1] The mother of the Machabees and the holy priest, Nicanor, spoke of the joys of heaven; David, in his Psalms, tells us how his heart thirsted for the courts of the Lord; and he extolled the happiness of those who dwelt in the house of the Lord forever. Yet beyond this mankind in general entertained gloomy and depressing views regarding the life after death. The ancient Romans believed in the Elysian fields; yet how sad were their conceptions of a land where departed spirits moved silently among kindred shades in a land of darkness! The Indian believed in a happy hunting-ground; the Mohammedan, in a paradise of sensual pleasures. The Christian alone, through the teaching of Our Lord and the light which the Holy Ghost has given to the Church, is able to grasp clear conceptions of that Heavenly City, of that New Jerusalem depicted by St. John and the Evangelists, where the elect enjoy ineffable peace and joy. It was our Blessed Lord who led captivity captive, and opened for the souls in Limbo and all His blessed followers the glorious kingdom of eternal happiness.

Let us approach in spirit the scene of the Ascension. Mary, our Blessed Mother, and the

[1] Job xix. 25.

disciples were assembled that solemn day on Mount Olivet. Jesus had given to them His last instructions, after which He lovingly blessed His Mother and His disciples, and told them not to depart from Jerusalem until the Comforter should come to them. As He was yet speaking, He began gradually to ascend before them, through the limpid air, until a cloud received Him out of their sight. All remained, looking upward, transfixed in adoring silence. The disciples rejoiced in the glory and the triumph of their Blessed Master, yet their hearts grew heavy at His departure. How lonely was that mountain solitude without Him! Did not Mary feel the departure of the visible presence of her adorable Son? Had she not, perhaps, tenderly inplored Him that she might accompany Him? Whither will He go without His Blessed Mother? Might she not, now that her mission was accomplished, depart with Him to share in His heavenly glory, as she had shared so profoundly in His earthly sufferings and sorrows? No, Blessed Mother, your time has not yet come; you have still a grand and important task to accomplish! The infant Church needs your care; you are to guide and direct it, even as you tended and watched over your adorable Son in His infancy. The Apostles need your maternal presence, your advice, your encouragement; the Evangelists need your wise instructions. You are yet to tell St. Luke all the beautiful truths connected with the mysteries of the Annuncia-

tion, the visit of St. Elizabeth, the birth of Our Lord, and the coming of the shepherds and the Wise Men. You must reveal the incidents of your Divine Child's flight into Egypt; of His presentation in the Temple; of your finding Him there after the three days' loss, and all the other wonderful happenings of His infancy, childhood and youth, which were known to you and Joseph alone.

Let us now follow in spirit our ascended Redeemer to the celestial realms. It is a day of triumph and rejoicing in heaven: The King of Glory goes to enter into His rest, to take possession of the kingdom prepared for Him from all eternity. He brings with Him the trophies of His victory; all the souls in Limbo arise to join Him in that glorious procession, where He goes forth as a conqueror and demands admittance at the celestial gates for Himself and His ransomed followers. The infinite debt has been paid; death and hell have been conquered; divine justice is satisfied, the kingdom of salvation has been bravely fought for and gloriously won! As He said to His disciples at Emmaus: "Was it not meet that the Son of Man should thus suffer, and so enter into His glory?"[1] Valiantly did He struggle and suffer for us, and now He goes to enter upon His glory. In that hour of immortal triumph were fulfilled the words of David, when he saw in prophetic vision this glorious Ascension of the

[1] Luke xxiv. 26.

world's Redeemer. Hearken to the angels who accompany Our Lord, as they demand admittance into heaven! Hear them cry aloud: "Lift up your gates, ye princes, and be ye lifted up, oh, eternal gates, and the King of Glory shall enter in!" And the angels within the portals having demanded: "Who is this King of Glory?" lo! the angels of the procession reply: "The Lord God of Heaven, the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your gates, ye princes, and be ye lifted up, oh, eternal gates, and the King of Glory shall enter in!" Then for the first time those everlasting gates were opened to ransomed humanity, and that glorious procession, headed by our Blessed Lord, entered the mansions of eternal bliss. There did He take possession of His eternal throne, to rule and govern His mighty kingdom forever. Behold our human nature seated at the right hand of the Father! Behold that body, once torn by scourges and lacerated by thorns and nails! Once covered with blood and wounds, it is brighter than ten thousand suns, filling all the empyrean with its glory! How joyously the angels must have come to welcome Him, to adore and praise Him, to thank Him for opening heaven to our fallen race! Then were the patriarchs and prophets who accompanied Our Lord received into the mansions of eternal bliss; and for the first time since the fall of the angels the empty thrones of Lucifer and his hosts were filled with ransomed captives. Two thousand years have now passed.

How many blessed spirits have since entered heaven! How many glorious martyrs, who suffered and bled and died for Him, have followed their Blessed Master into His kingdom and received from Him their imperishable crown! For us, also, a brief period in this land of exile, devoted to the faithful service of our King and our God, shall purchase an eternity of bliss. Oh, how all Christians, and especially members of the Rosary Confraternity, should rejoice in the recitation of this Second Glorious Mystery! The blissful Ascension of our Redeemer is the forerunner, the guarantee, of our own; for one day we, too, if faithful to His commandments, shall ascend to that glorious kingdom and participate in His rewards. Let us, therefore, unite with the angels and the saints in congratulating Our Lord on His triumph over death and hell, ever humbly thanking Him for the immortal victory that He has gained for Himself and for us. Let us congratulate those ancient patriarchs and prophets, those illustrious apostles, martyrs, and virgins who share with Him now the joys of heaven, and ask that whilst they continue to praise and bless our Redeemer, they may beseech Him to conduct us, in His own good time, to those everlasting mansions of bliss which He has prepared for His elect.

During our pilgrimage here below we are often visited by trials and crosses, pains of body and mind, of heart and of soul. Our good God has His wise designs in sending us these suffer-

ings. If accepted in a Christian spirit, they accomplish a great work in our souls; if borne patiently for the love of our crucified Master, they merit an eternal reward. All such tribulations detach our hearts from the pleasures of this life. They force us to pray, and to seek help from on high. Above all, they make us turn our eyes and hearts to that blessed home, where sorrow never enters, and they enable us to lay up treasures there which naught of earth can destroy nor thief break in and steal.

Lately there died a woman of great sanctity, who had spent forty-five long years under the stress of bitter sorrow and persecution. She had been induced by her mother, contrary to her own inclination, to marry a man of wealth, who was many years her senior. He was of a cruel temper, often dissipated, insanely jealous, and seemed to delight in making the life of his devoted wife miserable. Though reared a Catholic, he had abandoned both Church and Sacraments, and did what he could to prevent his family from practicing their religious duties. Like St. Monica, his faithful companion constantly prayed for her husband's conversion. To that end her Communions, her Masses, her Rosaries, and Stations of the Cross were continually offered; and as her children became capable of praying and of attending to their religious duties, they were carefully taught to offer all their good works for the conversion of their father. Often her neighbors said to

her: "Why not get a divorce? He is rich; you could have a good living from him!" Her answer was always: "Ah, no; I married him for better or for worse." A year before he died, the long-desired, long-prayed-for change occurred. The unworthy husband became a true penitent, and in his last days craved for no other attendant save his patient, loyal wife. He died, at last, an edifying, consoling death. After his funeral the priest said to her: "How happy you should be in the beautiful death of your husband!" "Ah, yes, Father," she said. "I knew it would come. I knew our heavenly Father would not refuse my prayers and the prayers of our children. Father, the neighbors long wanted me to put the poor man away and get a divorce; but I knew that had I done so he would have died a wretched death, and I could never have forgiven myself for it. Father," she added, "I have great confidence in the Rosary of our Blessed Mother. To her I constantly appealed during the dark years of the past. I felt she would not abandon me, but would some day lift the cross that was crushing me."

Let us likewise be faithful to the Rosary; and though we may not obtain our petitions immediately after presenting them through the hands of the Mother of God, let us, like this good woman, valiantly persevere. Let us have her unwavering confidence that, sooner or later, our prayers will be answered. Through Mary

we can obtain all necessary graces for ourselves and others in this life; and, what is more, we shall one day merit, through her powerful intercession, to follow our ascended Lord into His kingdom of light and peace. With her, the saints and the angels, we shall then behold forevermore the glory of our Blessed Redeemer, triumphantly seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, from whence He shall come to judge the living and the dead.

THE DESCENT OF THE HOLY GHOST

In this Third Glorious Mystery of the Rosary, we commemorate the coming of the Divine Spirit upon the disciples of Christ, and the coeval foundation of our Holy Mother the Church. Pentecost gloriously completes the cycle of the work of the Triune God. In the Creation, we worship the almighty power of the heavenly Father; in the Redemption, we behold with wonder the sublime mission of the Eternal Son, who said: "The Father hath worked till now, now I work." Jesus finished in Calvary's awful hour the work which His Father gave Him to do; and now, after His Ascension, He and the Father send down the Holy Ghost to complete the work of the Blessed Trinity. Thus, the Holy Ghost is especially the gift of the other two Divine Persons. His mission is the sublime work of guiding the Church, illuminating her supreme pastors, inspiring her saints, filling her doctors and her confessors with His choicest gifts, and establishing the reign of God in the souls of the faithful.

It is true that the Holy Ghost was always in the world. The Spirit of God spoke by the mouth of the patriarchs and the prophets from

the beginning; but on the great festival of Pentecost He came in a different manner, being, in the language of Scripture, poured out on the disciples to fit them for their exalted office. His advent was the especial fruit of our Blessed Lord's sufferings and death. The world had no right to His coming; it was unfitted for His sublime presence and work. But Jesus merited for us this heavenly gift, and went before the Father in order to plead for it in our behalf. "If I go not," He said, "the Paraclete will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you."[1] Presenting His sacred humanity before His heavenly Father, Our Lord besought Him through His adorable wounds to bestow this sublime gift upon His followers. And why was this? Why, we may ask, was the Paraclete sent to us? It was to perfect the work which the Son of God came on earth to inaugurate. He had come to establish His Church, He had come to build the B rk of Peter. During His public life He had collected the materials for that vessel. He had placed its timbers in their proper order; and, to use a figure employed by the early Fathers of the Church, having completed that Bark of Peter, it was destined to sail over every sea, to brave every storm, to be tried by every tempest, to be pursued by every piratical enemy. Men and demons would do their utmost to destroy it; but it was not destined to perish, for on it depended the salva-

[1] John xvi. 7.

tion of the world. On the first glorious Feast of Pentecost St. Peter's Bark was launched—the sails of that mighty vessel were first unfurled. What, then, was needed but a skilled Pilot to guide her course and favorable winds to fill her sails? To-day, she commences her glorious voyage; to-day, the divine Pilot—the Holy Ghost—is on board! To-day, the winds of heaven fill her sails; to-day, her crew begin to cast forth their net. St. Peter's Bark will sweep over every sea and gather in all souls destined for a happy eternity!

Let us here reflect for a moment upon the disciples of Christ, who formed the crew of that vessel. Let us consider their condition before the coming of the Holy Ghost. In the first place, we are told that they were hidden away in an upper chamber in Jerusalem, fearing the Jews. They were timid, cowardly men; their faith was yet weak: their hearts were trembling within them. They dreaded to proclaim publicly the glorious name of their Master, in whom they firmly believed; nay, more, they were poor laborers—ignorant, uneducated men, little skilled in public preaching. But lo! at the sound from heaven, "as of a rushing mighty wind which filled the whole house where they were sitting," a great change came over them. "They were all filled with the Holy Ghost," says the Scripture. That Divine Spirit appeared to them like tongues of fire, whereby their exalted mission as preachers of the Gospel was typified

and emphasized. Instantly their cold hearts burned with the fire of the Apostolate! Fear and cowardice departed forever.

The Apostles, having become in a manner new men, are now inflamed with the love of God and with the desire for the salvation of all mankind. They go forth immediately to proclaim the dignity, the power and the sanctity of that name which was so despised by the Jews, the glorious name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Boldly declaring their belief in His divinity, these once timid men are now willing to die martyrs for their Faith and the cause of the Blessed Master. The effect of Peter's first sermon on the day of Pentecost is recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. Three thousand were converted—"devout men out of every nation under heaven;" for at that time were gathered in Jerusalem, in order to celebrate the Pentecostal festival, Jews from nearly every part of the world whither the Hebrews had been scattered. All these were confounded, as the Acts testify, because every man with amazement heard the Apostles speak to him in his own tongue.

In creating this material world our heavenly Father was pleased not to leave it in darkness, but placed the sun in the heavens to shed light and heat over its surface, to bring fruits and flowers to perfection. And that sun is so exalted, so far removed from human influences, that no man or nation can interfere with its

light. So, in creating His Church, our Blessed Lord gave to it His Holy Spirit, which is its true Light, abiding with it forever, and conducting its children to paradise by the way of Christian perfection. Nor can men or demons prevent that sublime mission. Following St. Peter, the first to claim the special indwelling of the Paraclete is the supreme Head of the Church, its visible ruler and vicegerent of Jesus Christ. The Holy Ghost abides with our Holy Father the Pope, illuminating his counsels, filling him with divine wisdom, guarding him from error in his teachings, and, in short, making him what he is—the infallible guide for both pastors and people. He, the Third Person of the Adorable Trinity, is with the Church in her councils, filling her hierarchy with zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of their people. He directs their deliberations, illuminating their intellects so as to guard their people from all error and heresy. He is with the individual bishop, assisting him with the work of his diocese. He is with the pastor, instructing and enlightening his people. He is with the priest in the administration of the Sacraments. In the words of St. Augustine: "When I baptize, it is the Holy Ghost who purifies; when I pronounce the words of salvation, it is the Holy Ghost who cleanses from sin; when I speak the words of consecration, it is the Holy Ghost who changes bread into the Body of Our Lord, and wine into His Blood." The Holy Ghost is with the nun

in the schoolroom, with the mother in the Christian home, teaching the child the simple but sublime truths of our holy religion. He is with the faithful, welding them together, uniting them, as the grains of wheat in the bread, into that glorious body of believers of which Jesus Christ is the Head. Sublime mission of the Holy Ghost! Wonderful gift of God to a sinful world! For nineteen hundred years has that sublime Spirit continually remained with the Bark of St. Peter, bringing and preserving therein all the children of God in the unity of faith and in the bond of charity. From these marvellous conditions and results shall not all men, not wilfully blind to the light of truth, believe and testify that the Church is the spotless Spouse of Christ, the immaculate Bride of the Lamb? "By this shall all men know," says Christ, "that you are my disciples—if you have love one for another;" and again, in the discourse at the Last Supper: "I pray for them that they all may be one, as Thou, Father in me, and I in Thee." [1]

Proceeding to reflect upon the work of the Holy Ghost in the individual soul, we should, each of us, consider here the infinite debt we owe to that Divine Spirit for the precious graces which He has bestowed on us through the holy Sacraments. First of all, should we gratefully acknowledge the gift of Faith—that gift which is so inestimably precious that without it it is

[1] John xvii. 21.

impossible to please God, as St. Paul emphatically declares.

Though the Holy Ghost, according to Sacred Scripture, is most prodigally shed abroad throughout the whole universe, how many are there, alas, who place obstacles to that divine Luminary and prevent its rays from penetrating their souls! Ignorance, prejudice, and the corruption of gross vices are as so many dense clouds which prevent the rays of that divine Light from illumining the soul. It is true that Faith is a free gift of God, and that God may and can, and often does, bestow that gift, even unasked, upon persons leading a life of sin. Thus, He enlightened Saul on the road to Damascus, and made him an apostle at the very time that he was breathing threats against the Christians. But, as a rule, the priceless gift of Faith must be asked of God, and the means of obtaining it must be employed by those who desire to possess it, one of those means being the Sacrament of Baptism. Baptism is not only the door to the other Sacraments, but it gives us a spiritual right to the Holy Ghost. It infuses into the heart of the recipient the gift of divine Faith, which is to the soul what sight is to the body; and it enables even a child, as reason dawns, to grasp the lofty teachings of the Church. Later on in the Christian life, the Holy Ghost is given to the children of God in the Sacrament of Confirmation, by which, in the language of St. Paul, we become the temples of the Holy

Ghost, and should (as he tells us) glorify and bear God in our body. The work of the Holy Ghost in the individual soul is to form Jesus Christ in it. Hence, again says the Apostle of the Gentiles, "The Holy Ghost is laboring with unceasing groaning that Jesus Christ be formed in you." And if, true to His guidance, the soul advances from perfection to perfection, becoming more and more enlightened, more and more inflamed with the love of God, it at last arrives at that sublime state to which Christ called all His followers when He enjoined upon them: "Be ye perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

According to St. Paul, there are three ways of opposing the Holy Ghost in His action on the soul. The first is our resistance to His divine influence when we do not co-operate with His loving designs in the work of our sanctification. He is ever laboring with unceasing groaning (says the Apostle) to form Christ in us. He is urging us to more fervent and frequent prayer, to more manly self-denial, more frequent and profitable approach to the Sacraments, more earnest imitation of our Blessed Lord, who counsels us to renounce ourselves, and daily to take up our cross and follow Him. It grieves this Blessed Spirit of God to behold us so careless and indifferent in the great work of our own sanctification. We are like a lazy farmer who, possessed of rich soil which if well cultivated would produce

luscious and abundant fruit, fails to improve his opportunities. We also fail to cooperate with our gracious Lord in producing a golden harvest. We also fail to obey Him who tells us to lay up treasures in heaven, where the rust cannot destroy, nor moths consume, nor thieves break through and steal.

The second way in which we oppose the Holy Ghost is when we grieve Him by deliberately committing venial sin. Venial sin does not kill the soul, but it often seriously wounds it. It defiles it, and, in a manner, paralyzes it by weakening its energies and leaving it faint and sickly. Just as neglect of a trifling malady often leads to the death of the body, so venial sin too often leads the soul to mortal sin.

Alas, for the careless Christian whose life abounds in many wilful venial sins! By undue indulgence of the appetite, slothfulness in prayer and other religious duties; by slight fits of anger, or of impatience; and, what is far more serious, by frequenting dangerous company, and giving the eyes, the tongue and the mind liberties that are dangerous to modesty, how often do men and women seriously wound the soul, even though they do not actually cause her death!

But the greatest of all evils occurs when the sinner utterly quenches the light of the Holy Ghost by wilful mortal sin. "Know you not that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost?" "He who defileth the temple of God,"

says St. Paul, "him shall the Lord destroy." It is true that although the sentence of death is passed upon deadly sin, through the infinite mercy of God, its execution is often deferred. Though the Holy Ghost is driven away from the soul by one mortal sin, and the temple of God is horribly deformed and devastated, like a beautiful structure charred and blackened by fire, yet, praise be to God! the Holy Ghost does not yet abandon the unworthy Christian. By many gentle and loving means He still strives to bring back the sinner to repentance. Even as the dove, driven from its little cote by the serpent which has entered and defiled its nest, hovers around, waiting for the venomous intruder's departure, in order to return and cleanse its nest and again dwell in its cherished home, or as the poor Irish mother, driven from the loved cottage of her youth by the emissary of the landlord, does not abandon the home of her heart, but sits by the roadside with her children till the intruder has withdrawn, and then goes back to her dwelling, rekindling the fire upon her humble hearth and making bright again her little cottage, so the Holy Spirit does not completely abandon the soul when it falls into mortal sin, but mercifully endeavors to excite it to remorse. Sometimes He makes use of sickness, of loss of temporal goods or friends; sometimes, of the sudden death of a companion in sin. Or, it may be by a mission, a sermon, or a word of advice

that the transgressor is induced to enter into himself, to forsake his sinful life, and return once more to his God.

Yes, it is the Holy Ghost who, acting thus upon the sinner's soul, urges upon him this vital change. And when at length the unfortunate one yields to this Divine Spirit, immediately, like a skilful architect, divine love and mercy begin to purify and sanctify the soul, to rebuild its beautiful temple, to adorn it, and make it once more His dwelling place, causing the angels in heaven to rejoice over the sinner doing penance.

Such is the mission and the work of the Holy Ghost. We should then labor earnestly to cooperate with Him in that blessed work of our sanctification. Let us be fervent in prayer; for this is the will of God, that we watch and pray without ceasing, lest we enter into temptation. Frequently, too, let us approach the Sacraments of Penance and the Blessed Eucharist, for they are the great channels through which the Holy Ghost directly acts on our souls. Let us not grieve the Holy Spirit by exposing ourselves to sin or the occasions of sin, but faithfully correspond to His graces, and gratefully thank Him for the gift of Faith, which infinitely surpasses all the riches and treasures of this world.

THE ASSUMPTION

Behold! My Beloved speaketh to me; arise, make haste, my love, my dove, my beautiful one, and come, the winter is now past, the rain is over and gone.—Canticle of Canticles, ii. 10.

THE two closing mysteries of the Holy Rosary deal especially with the celestial joys and rewards of our Blessed Lady. They set forth before us her glorious Assumption into heaven, and her Coronation by the Triune Deity as Queen of heaven and earth. The Assumption is one of the greatest of the Divine Mother's festivals. Our Catholic forefathers called it "Great Lady Day," as they considered it the most beautiful and most solemn of her feasts. The end of her long and weary pilgrimage had come; her yearning soul was, at last, drawn up to be united with her Beloved, never again to be separated from Him. In the Introit of the Mass of the day, the Church calls upon us to rejoice in the Lord in celebrating the festival of the Assumption, in whose solemnity the angels rejoice, and together praise the Son of God.

It is generally believed that the death of our Blessed Mother occurred fifteen years after the ascension of her adorable Son. She was then in her sixty-third year, and having left Ephesus,

where she had lived several years in the house of St. John, the Beloved Disciple, she had come with him to Jerusalem. She knew that the end of her pilgrimage was at hand, and she desired to be near that city and its precincts which had been sanctified by the footprints and blood of the world's Redeemer. She made all the preparations for her last moments; and we are told that, by a special providence of God, the disciples of her Son were gathered in Jerusalem from their several missions, in order to assist at her deathbed and receive her last blessing. It might be asked why Mary, who had never been defiled by sin, should be forced to submit to death, which was the punishment of Adam's sin. But even if the immaculate Virgin, having closely imitated her Divine Son in every detail of His earthly life, had not desired to imitate Him also in paying the debt of nature, the Angel of the Schools teaches that death and the miseries which we experience, such as hunger, thirst, and all mundane maladies, arise from the constitutive principle of our nature. Before the sin of Adam these miseries were unknown, for God had elevated Adam to a supernatural state; but human nature, having been despoiled, by the justice of God, of these immunities—which He had conferred as a special grace—lost through sin its integrity and those privileges so liberally given it, and which are not restored in Baptism. [1]

[1] St. Thos. Sum. I. p. q. 69, a. 3.

Mary, then, the Mother of Life, lay stretched upon her couch of death; and the disciples, realizing that the holy Virgin's end was approaching, all knelt around her in tears and asked her blessing. This she lovingly imparted to them, imploring them to labor with zeal in propagating the Church of her beloved Son; and having promised them that she would ever watch over them and prove their faithful intercessor at the throne of grace, she passed away in a rapture of divine love. Closing her eyes sweetly in death, the disciples placed her sacred body in the tomb. According to tradition, angels' voices were heard for three days and three nights, singing exquisitely around it. At the end of that period St. Thomas, who was not present when she died, rejoined the other Apostles. Full of sorrow for the loss of one whom he regarded as his Mother, he desired to behold once more her beloved face. To satisfy his longing they opened the tomb, when lo! the Virgin's sacred body was no longer there, but, tradition tells us, the tomb was filled with snow-white lilies emitting a delicious odor. Her sacred body had been assumed into heaven by her adorable Son: and it is this, her triumphant Assumption, that we commemorate in the Fourth Glorious Mystery of her holy Rosary.

"In the Old Law," said St. Thomas, "there were two events which filled all Israel with joy: One was the bearing of the Ark of the Covenant into the house of David, which was a source of

great rejoicing to David and all his people. The other was when the Ark was brought, amid the chanting of choirs, and the sound of timbrels and harps, into the beautiful new Temple which Solomon had just completed for its reception. There were also two great events in heaven: One was when our humanity, united with the divinity—the Living Ark, which enclosed all the wisdom and knowledge of God,[1]—entered heaven, accompanied by all the ransomed souls from Limbo; the other was when our dear Mother, the most perfect of all human beings, entered, leaning on her adorable Son, to take possession of that throne and that glory prepared for her from eternity."

In the Assumption of our Blessed Lady, we behold our human nature exalted and honored above the most resplendent angels in heaven, and placed at the right hand of her adorable Son. If all Israel united with Solomon in celebrating with song and timbrel and harp the coming of the Ark of the Covenant into the Temple prepared for it, how much more did the saints and angels rejoice in seeing the Ark of the New Covenant, the pure and spotless Virgin, conducted on this day into the joys of paradise! How those blessed spirits of God must have exulted, and burst into paeans of welcome, beholding with wonder and delight their glorious Queen coming in all regal splendor to take possession of the throne prepared for her before

[1] St. Thos. Villanova, 2nd Sermon on Assumption B. V. M.

ST. ALBERT'S COLLEGE LIBRARY

the foundation of the world! We can picture to ourselves the patriarchs and prophets approaching to greet that glorious Daughter of Israel and thank her for all that she had done and suffered in the work of the world's redemption. What must have been the unspeakable rapture of Joachim and Anna, of Joseph, her faithful spouse, of the Baptist, and John, her adopted son, of Elizabeth, Zachary, Magdalen, and of so many other chosen souls who had known her during their lives on earth!

How blissful, also, to us, dear fellow Rosarians, is the consideration of our Lady's Assumption, for, although we are still far removed from our blessed home in heaven, yet, in telling the beads of the Fourth Glorious Mystery, we commemorate the elevation of the body and soul of one of our fellow beings to the most sublime heights of heaven. We see our poor humanity, apart from the divinity, thus exalted, thus glorified, in God's eternal kingdom. Never would poor human nature have been so elevated, had it not been for that *felix culpa*—that happy fault—the fall of our first parents in the Garden of Eden. In Mary's Assumption we have reason not only to thank Almighty God for the favor bestowed on our race in the honor conferred on this glorious daughter of Eve, but we are filled with unbounded confidence in the goodness of God, who has thus elevated this Woman of women to be our Mother and our powerful advocate before the throne of His mercy. We

acknowledge that we are sinners, but behold! in the bright realms above we have the Advocate of Sinners who, on account of our fall, was raised to such an eminent dignity on earth, and is now enthroned as our refuge and mediatrix in heaven. Like Queen Esther,

> Standing close to the King
> In a vesture of gold,

she pleads incessantly for the people of her race, and is ever ready to aid all the children of Adam by her powerful intercession.

O Blessed Mother of God! it is with reason that all your true children rejoice in your glorious Assumption, for they see in you their irresistible advocate with your adorable Son. We know well that Jesus Christ is the advocate of redemption, that without the merits of His blood no man can be saved; but we know too that He is a God "who loveth justice and hateth iniquity," and therefore must hate sin with an eternal hatred, and punish it wherever it is found. But, praise to His holy Name! He delights in showing mercy; and He has given to His saints, and especially to you, His Blessed Mother, the office of mercy, that through your merits and your powerful pleadings with Him we sinners may obtain pity and pardon, when we deserve nothing but justice and condign punishment.

It is this hope that has ever filled the Catholic heart with confidence in the powerful intercession of the Mother of God. When we read the

lives of God's illustrious saints, we find that they were all inspired with this humble and unwavering confidence. The child, who has angered his father by disobedience, will run and hide in the arms of his loving mother, imploring her protection from the just punishment which he deserves. Even so, poor, repentant sinners run to Mary, knowing well how grievously they have offended God, but firmly believing that she, who found favor with the Almighty even before the mystery of the Incarnation was accomplished, will much more find favor now with her adorable Son, who is the judge of the living and the dead. Hence, the prayer of that bright light of the Middle Ages, St. Bernard: "Remember, O most spotless Mother, that never was any one known who sought your help or implored your aid and did not receive powerful assistance!" How many, indeed, O Blessed Mother, have experienced your tender pity and compassion, and your efficacious intercession with your adorable Son!

Bourdaloue tells us in his sermon on Our Lady's Assumption: "Her death was precious in the sight of the Lord because her life was spent in His service. She was ever faithful to grace; her will was ever conformed to His adorable will; her heart was never attached to the pleasures or vanities of this life." The death of all God's saints, according to David, is precious in His sight; but just as we cooperate with God's grace, and labor to promote His

glory and our own perfection, in the same proportion will our death be precious before Him and our eternal reward great in heaven.

Is it not sad, then, dear Rosarians, to consider that whilst we believe in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and know that our reward or punishment must be according to our work (for He will render to every man according to his works), that we are so slothful in doing good, and so prone to add sin to sin? Alas, how many there are who live in mortal sin, and are thus unable to merit any supernatural reward! Is it not of faith that mortal sin makes us enemies of God, and that from an enemy He will accept nothing? What can be sadder than that men, destined for heaven, and having all the means for attaining it within their reach, think little of its unspeakable delights, but prostitute their hearts to sensual gratifications and sacrifice their souls for filthy, fleeting pleasures? Alas, how many are the daughters of Mary who, instead of seeking to please God and their immaculate Mother, place the affections of their heart on vanity and fashion, and cling to sinful fellow-creatures who seek their eternal destruction! O God! that all would be wise in time, and labor not for that which perisheth, but for that which endureth unto everlasting life; that all would lay up treasures for heaven, and so live as to be always prepared to die!

St. Alphonsus, speaking of the glorious death and Assumption of our Blessed Lady, closes

his discourse in these words: "We have contemplated, brethren, the death of our Blessed Lady and her glorious Assumption. We have followed her in spirit into the joys of heaven; we have seen her surrounded by patriarchs and prophets, by saints and angels; we have seen her adorned by her adorable Son at His right hand. Let us unite with heaven and earth in praising and blessing our glorious Queen. Let us congratulate her on her happiness and on the power which Our Lord has given her, and let us implore her by that power and glory which she now enjoys to look down with compassion on her poor children. Let us beseech her to watch over us during life, and when death comes, to bring us to share with her in the glory of heaven, where, with all the saints, we shall see God face to face, and praise and bless Him and His Virgin Mother for all eternity. Amen."

THE CORONATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN

Thou art all fair, O my beloved, and there is no spot in thee. Come, and thou shalt be crowned.—Canticle of Canticles, iv. 8.

We are now to consider the last mystery of our cherished Rosary, and with it witness, in spirit, Mary's triumphal enthronement in heaven by her adorable Son. The Fourth Glorious Mystery portrayed to us Our Lord assisting, with the great body of the Apostles, at the death of His Blessed Mother. It commemorated the immaculate Virgin's ascent from the tomb to the heights of paradise, where the angels and saints awaited her coming with rapturous canticles of joy. Thence we beheld the patriarchs and prophets, the kings and ancients of the Old Law, come forth to welcome her, and return thanks to her for all that she had done and suffered in union with her Son for man's redemption. All the inhabitants of heaven, we may well believe, approached on that blessed day the sinless Mother of Christ, to pay her homage as their queen and sovereign, after God. But it sufficed not for Our Lord to come in person to transport His Blessed Mother into heaven;

nor was it enough for Him to call on all His creatures to recognize her sublime dignity. He desired also to place on her virginal brow that diadem of glory which had been decreed to her—yea, before the foundation of the world. When the mother of the sons of Zebedee asked of Christ that those sons—James and John—might be placed in His kingdom, the one on His right hand, and the other on His left, Our Lord replied that it was not for Him to bestow upon them this distinction, which was reserved for those for whom it was intended by His Father. Yes, the eternal Father had long before prepared at His right hand a throne for His immaculate Daughter; and the Royal Prophet foresaw and foretold the splendor of her apparel on the day she took possession of it, when he said: "The queen stood on thy right hand in gilded clothing, surrounded with varieties."[1] Ah, yes, dear Rosarians, this queen placed at the right hand of the Omnipotent God is none other than our beloved Mother Mary—the marvelous Woman seen in vision by St. John the Evangelist, clothed with the sun, the moon at her feet, and a crown of twelve stars upon her head. She was fair and beautiful in her meek humility, yet mighty and "terrible as an army set in battle array." If the great King Solomon commanded that a throne should be placed for his mother, Bethsabee, how much greater should be the honor accorded by the

[1] Ps. xliv. 9.

Son of God—the Lord of lords—when His immaculate Mother entered at last into His glorious kingdom! He who is infinitely more powerful than Solomon has not forgotten that when He vouchsafed to be sent from His heavenly abode, Mary, the incomparable Virgin, received Him in the most sacred spot on earth, that is to say, in her most chaste heart, overflowing with grace and adorned with every virtue. Hence, St. Bernard has said: "Jesus desired to honor His Mother in heaven by giving her the highest place of glory; that is to say, a throne elevated expressly according to His intention, at His own right hand." [1] St. Augustine thinks that such a throne should be incomparably superior to that offered by Solomon to Bethsabee, since it would be unworthy of the tenderness and munificence of Jesus Christ to place His Mother on anything less than a celestial throne, only second to His own. "Your son," said the great doctor, speaking to Mary, "has elevated you, not only into the material atmosphere, like Elias, or to the third heaven, like St. Paul, but above all the angels, even to the throne where He has placed the flesh He has taken from you;" for, . . . (he adds) "Our Lord would not permit you to be seated elsewhere than with Himself, who took his birth from you." [2]

But, according to the Blessed Guerric, Our

[1] St. Bernard, Sermon on The Great Sign.

[2] Exultata est ad Celestia regna super chorus Angelorum. In 1st Vespers Assum.

Lord for the glory of His Blessed Mother not only established her on a throne beside Himself—He actually took her for His own throne. Do not believe, said the illustrious Abbé, that Christ found more happiness and glory in dwelling in the bosom of Abraham than in the bosom of His Mother; since the King of Glory placed in her His own throne. "Come," He said, "my chosen one, and I will establish my throne in you." One cannot conceive a truer or more forceful expression, or a title more capable of expressing the supreme glory of Mary, than that of "the throne of the Sovereign God." The divine Majesty could not communicate to any soul as intimately, as freely or as familiarly, the abundance of His choicest graces as He did in an exceptional manner to the Virgin of virgins. You remember that Our Lord promised His disciples that when the Son of Man should be enthroned in His kingdom, they should also be seated with Him there upon thrones. In another place, He said: "I dispose to you, as my Father hath disposed to me, a Kingdom. . . . That you may sit upon thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." [1] To His Mother, who has merited much more than any disciple, He has promised a recompense much more distinctive and glorious: "Come, my elect one," He says, "and I shall establish my throne in you."

Having thus installed His immaculate Mother upon the throne prepared for her from all eter-

[1] Luke xxii. 29, 30.

nity, her adorable Son tenderly placed upon her brow a crown of ineffable splendor. It was then that Christ addressed Mary as Assuerus of old spake to Esther. For the name of the Jewish queen is interpreted "elevated among the people"; and Esther was a true prototype of the immaculate Mary, who was exalted above the choirs of angels and all the blessed of the celestial kingdom. Jesus, therefore, said to His beloved Mother: "Come hither, and touch the sceptre! Receive the royal dignity, and become the ruler of heaven and earth. As queen and empress of angels and of men, sit thou at my right hand, arrayed for all eternity in that golden garment which is thine immaculate body."[1]

In contemplating the glory of our Blessed Mother, thus crowned by her adorable Son and placed in the highest position in heaven, after Him, two considerations should especially occupy our thoughts. One is that of profound gratitude for all God has done in elevating our poor human nature in the person of our Blessed Mother, and placing her so close to Himself, that she might there make intercession for us, and aid and assist us in all our needs, our sufferings and our sorrows.

It is recorded in Holy Writ that when, of old, Moses implored God to spare his ungrateful people, the Omnipotent One commanded him to let Him alone, that He might destroy Israel

[1] Moran, Month of Mary.

on account of its guilty rebellion. Thereby it was implied that if Moses persevered in pleading for the Jews God could not but spare them, since it would be impossible for Him to resist the prayer of His faithful servant. How much more powerful is the intercession of Mary for the unhappy sinners of all times! When she, the Queen of Mercy, beseeches Almighty God to pardon us, no matter how great may be our offences, He is, in a manner, forced to cover the red arm of His justice, to hide the sword of His vengeance, in order to yield to the supplication of His well-beloved Mother, whom He has given to us to be our Mother also. Let us, then, have a great and joyful confidence in the powerful intercession of our Blessed Mother Mary. She is truly to all Christians Our Lady of Perpetual Help, an advocate and mediatrix, most anxious and willing to assist all for whom her Son died on Calvary.

The second consideration arising from our Lady's Coronation is that God rewards each soul according to its works. Striving and struggling here through this valley of tears, poor pilgrims of earth, beset by innumerable trials and temptations, we should be supported and encouraged in our difficulties by the hope of the reward which awaits us in our Fatherland above.

The great Apostle of the Gentiles sustained himself by the hope of the crown of justice prepared for him; as, indeed, did all the saints

and martyrs through the conflicts and sufferings of the ages. Those courageous servants of Christ well knew that God was a just God, and that their reward would be exceeding great. In many cases, the blessed martyrs of the Church had even more than faith to sustain them in their torments. Some of them realized in a certain measure, even in this life, the glory that awaited them. Thus, St. Agnes was able to tell her judges: "Our Lord deigns to sustain His servants, not only with the hope of a reward, but is even pleased to grant many of them a foretaste of the joys of heaven." That ineffable joy and consolation animated many other of the martyrs in the midst of their bitterest sufferings. For instance, St. Stephen beheld the glory of heaven whilst they were stoning him to death; St. Tiburtius declared, whilst walking on burning coals, that he seemed to be treading a bed of roses, St. Agatha, after thirty days of vilest persecution, was placed on the rack because she would not sacrifice her faith and her chastity. Afterwards, the tyrant ordered her breasts to be cut off, and his minions cast her, thus bleeding and mutilated, into a frightful prison. It was then, we are told, that Christ sent St. Peter to heal His suffering spouse, and the apparition of the holy Apostle illuminated the darkness of her dungeon-cell as with a bright light from heaven. St. Francis Xavier, lying alone in the agonies of death upon the burning sands of India, begged God to diminish the consolations

inundating his soul, declaring that that flood of spiritual joy and peace was more than human heart could bear. These are only a few examples of the consolations which Our Lord vouchsafes to His faithful servants in order to encourage them in their trials.

If our Blessed Lady was sustained in her sorrows here below by the foreknowledge of her future glory, her soul was filled with ecstatic joy in contemplating the power which her Coronation would give her. She foresaw that, as Queen of heaven and earth, she would be able to wield a sceptre of ineffable power, pity, and and mercy in behalf of all who would invoke her assistance. Dear Rosarians, what delicious consolations have you not received in assisting the deserving poor; and how often have you not longed for increased wealth and opportunity in order to relieve more efficiently the distressed! Consider, then, the intense joy of our Blessed Lady when she saw that, through her glorious Coronation, she would be empowered to bestow the riches of heaven on her needy, suffering and sorrowing children. Jesus is King as God and as man. As God, He deserved that title from all eternity; as man, he has merited it by His death. And Mary, as His Mother, is Queen. She is both His Mother and His spouse, pure and immaculate. She is His spouse, because at the death of Jesus she brought forth all believers to the true light of grace, and thus became our spiritual mother. Mary is Queen—

this is of faith—it is the teaching of the Fathers. St. Gregory calls her the sovereign Queen of the human race. St. Antoninus declares her Queen of the world. The Church salutes her, Queen of heaven. "Hail, holy Queen, Mother of mercy!" she cries. Again, in the Litany of Loretto, she begs her intercession as Queen of the Angels, Queen of the Patriarchs, Queen of the Prophets and the Apostles. "Christ Our Lord is King of the Angels and of the whole world," said Father Claus. He shared that dignity with His Mother: the King's Mother is Queen. The Church salutes her Queen of heaven and of earth. As Mother of God, she has dominion over all things under God. Christ loves His Mother with an infinite love, and He has therefore willingly given her this dominion.[1] But it was on the glorious day of her Coronation that Mary came into possession of this divine power, which she is to exercise as long as a single child of the human race needs her assistance.

Have we not then reason to rejoice in the Coronation of our Blessed Mother Mary? We see in her our human nature raised to the highest dignity which it is possible for God to give a creature. God had but one Son, and cannot have another; and Mary has but one Son, and that Son is the Lord of heaven and earth. No woman can share that dignity with her. Let us raise our hearts in gratitude to God for the

[1] Claus Lib. 3rd No. 3rd.

honor He has bestowed on a daughter of our race. By thus crowning her Queen of heaven and earth He has made public the recognition of her power. It is the proclamation of her dignity. We have now a right to approach her throne of glory and, in a manner, demand of her all the assistance that we need in this valley of tears. Even as the natural mother is enriched by the God of nature with the means of supporting the child of her womb, and as nature herself is enriched with a power to pour forth its flowers and fruits, so, O Mother Mary, O Queen of heaven and earth! thou art enriched by the Omnipotent God with all the treasures of nature and of grace. Do not then refuse, Blessed Mother, to aid and console us in all our necessities. We believe in thee, we hope in thee, we love thee, Blessed Mother, next to God. Oh, then, show thyself to us a mother. Be thou our advocate in all our needs during life; and, at the hour of death, show us Jesus, the blessed fruit of thy womb.[1]

And now, in conclusion, let us cry out with St. Bernard: "O Virgin Mother, there was no place on earth more fitted to be the temple of God's adorable Son than thy chaste womb, nor is there a throne in heaven more royal than that on which thou art placed to-day by thy Son!" Monseigneur De Segur further says that, "in contemplating the Assumption and Coronation of our Blessed Mother Mary, amid

[1] Moran, Month of the Rosary, pp. 5, 9, Vol. I.

the joys and glories of heaven, it should be our endeavor to fit ourselves for our own future assumption and coronation." At the moment of death, if we are found worthy, our soul will be immediately admitted to the presence of God; but the body, as we know, must remain in the grave, where repose all the rest of the children of Adam, excepting the immaculate flesh of our Blessed Mother. But on the day of the general resurrection the bodies of the just will rise transformed, luminous, glorious. As the Apostle says, "that which was mortal shall put on immortality." Then, too, will the bodies of the redeemed have their assumption, rejoining the soul in the beautiful union of immortality. Hence, the life of a good Christian here is nothing more than a preparation for the final translation from earth to heaven. How earnestly, therefore, should we strive to render our coming assumption more glorious, our future crown more brilliant; for Faith teaches us that God will render to every man according to his works. Did we sufficiently realize this, how perseveringly we would endeavor in the midst of our trials to lay up treasures in heaven! Oh, how happy are they who from the hour of Baptism have preserved themselves unsullied from sin! How happy they who have spent their whole lives for God, ever toiling to promote His glory, neglecting nothing that would contribute to the salvation of their own souls and those of their fellowmen! On the other hand, how foolish

are they who lay up here naught save perishable treasures, which the moth can consume, the rust decay, and the thieves of hell break through and steal! At the close of life they will go with empty hands before the dreadful judgment-seat of Christ, awaking, too late, to the realization that no eternal reward, no bright crown of immortality, awaits them in heaven!

You, members of the Rosary, whom God has enlightened with the truths of our Faith, let it be yours to labor now in the work of your own salvation and perfection. You have been attracted to the Confraternity of the Rosary, by God's grace; you have been enlightened by its mysteries; you have been encouraged by the promise of its indulgences. Remember that Almighty God has given you light and opportunities to labor at the work of your perfection. He will expect of you a corresponding cooperation. As faithful Rosarians, you should be zealous for His honor and glory; you should have His interest ever at heart; you should ever deplore the sad condition of the Church, and pray for her defence against the many enemies that are seeking her destruction. You should sympathize practically with all the trials and sufferings of our Holy Father, the Pope. You should lament the number of souls throughout the universe that are deluded or blinded by infidelity, heresy, or idolatry. Like true children of the Rosary, followers of St. Dominic, your hearts should burn with zeal for the conversion

of these unhappy people. Still more, forget not that "vast kingdom of Mary," as Father Faber calls it, the region of purgatory, where the suffering souls are stretching forth their hands to you, imploring your help. It is that you may succor and release these afflicted ones that your Rosaries are so wonderfully indulgenced. Shall they cry to you in vain for an alms, whilst you have the power to assist them? St. Teresa has said that she would willingly suffer all the pains of purgatory for the merit of one "Hail Mary," said with ordinary devotion. Oh, then, for the love of God and His Blessed Mother, hasten to the relief of the poor suffering souls who seek your assistance by repeating the Rosary frequently in their behalf!

THE SALVE REGINA

WHETHER the whole Rosary is said, or only five decades, as soon as the last "Glory be to the Father" is ended, the *Salve Regina* or "Hail, Holy Queen," is immediately added. This prayer, like the Rosary, comes down to us from "the ages of Faith," and, after the Hail Mary, is one of the most powerful petitions we can offer to our Blessed Lady. For a long time it was supposed that St. Bernard, that ardent lover of Mary, was its author, but we now know that it was used by the Church long before the days of that illustrious doctor.[1] The opinion of many is, however, that St. Bernard added the last few words to the *Salve*. Entering on one occasion the Cathedral of Cologne, and hearing the choir sing the *Salve*, in his fervor he cried out, "O clement, O pious, O sweet Virgin Mary!"

The Church showed her esteem for this prayer by adopting it into her liturgy, and by requiring it to be chanted solemnly during a large portion of the ecclesiastical year. Most of the old religious Orders are in the habit of singing it processionally

[1] See a learned article on the *Salve* by Father Henry, D.D., in the Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. XIII. p. 409.

every day after Compline. Blessed Jordan of Saxony, third General of the Dominicans, not only commanded it to be daily chanted in procession, but required that as soon as a member of a convent was seen to approach his last agony, the whole community should assemble in his cell and there chant the *Salve* around his deathbed. This was done with a view to inspire in the dying confidence in the all-powerful intercession of our Blessed Mother, and to obtain her aid before the throne of her Son for the departing brother.

There is no certainty as to the time when the *Salve* was first added to the Rosary; but all can see how appropriately this beautiful prayer terminates that holy exercise, and how the mind and heart naturally turn to her whom we accompany in spirit through the scenes of her joys, her sorrows, or her glories. We instinctively feel like casting ourselves at her sacred feet, and crying to her in the fullness of our heart: "Hail, Holy Queen, Mother of mercy! Hail, our life, our sweetness and our hope!" Then, reviewing briefly the mysteries just contemplated, and considering how much has been done for us on the part of Jesus and Mary, and our own want of fidelity and gratitude, we lovingly and confidingly add, "to thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve; to thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears!"

We are aware that the adversaries of the

Church object to our language in the *Salve*, telling us that God alone is our life and our hope. Ah, we know this well—just as well as they do—but we also know that God came to us through Mary; that she it was who "found favor with God," and, because of her sublime sanctity, merited, in a manner, the wondrous and solitary dignity of Mother of God. Her birth gave hope to a despairing world. Her consent to become the Mother of man's Redeemer, when she said, "Be it done unto me according to Thy word," was the fiat which caused the heavens to bow down to the earth and the Son of God to become the Son of Mary. Yes, holy Queen, thou art truly the Mother of mercy, since the God of mercy is thy Son! Thou art our life, our sweetness and our hope. The souls of men were dead—deprived of spiritual life—till thou didst give us life in its essence, the Life of our life, who came to give life to all who would receive Him.[1] O Virgin Mother, how great was the hope thou gavest to Zachary, to the shepherds, to the wise men and to the whole human race, in giving us thy adorable Son! With reason, then, we cry to thee who hast been so highly favored by God. With reason we send up to thee our sighs, our "mourning and weeping in this valley of tears." We know well that we deserve punishment for our offences, and for our abuse of grace, but O Mother! lift up thy pure hands to Jesus in

[1] John i. 4.

our behalf; for thy sake He will have pity and mercy on us.

In the solemn *Salve* processions made daily by some religious Orders there is one petition that is especially emphasized, and to render it more efficacious the processionists stop in their march, and humbly kneel to implore Mary to favor their prayers. Heaven seems to open to the humble petitioners; their minds and hearts are fixed on its glorious Queen, and with their whole souls they cry: "Turn, then, most gracious advocate, thine eyes of mercy towards us, and after this our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus." Here, indeed, is the prayer of a lively faith, the ardent longing of a Christian soul, the burning desire of our human hearts! We do not ask you, O sweet Mother, for the goods of this world, for the pleasures of this life; these will not satisfy us, nor do we want even heaven without your Son. It would not be enough. We want to see Him, to behold His face for all eternity. This, and only this, will satisfy the longings of our poor human heart. Turn, then, most gracious advocate, a look of compassion on us. We know our unworthiness, our sinfulness; we know how often we deserve to lose forever the sight of your adorable Son, but let those eyes of mercy turn to us and pity our poverty, our weakness and our misery. You cannot behold our wretchedness, sweet Mother, without compassionating us; help us to conquer ourselves, and to triumph

over our bitter enemy, who is ever alert, seeking our destruction. And when the end comes—when death bids us leave this vale of tears—then, O Mother of mercy! show us Jesus, the blessed fruit of thy womb! Oh, obtain that His face may be one of mercy and compassion; let His light shine upon us, and thus turn the night of our exile into everlasting day!

St. Anselm beautifully expresses the confidence and faith of the Catholic heart in the powerful intercession of the Mother of God. "I was born a sinner," he says. "Baptized and purified, I became again a sinner, not such as I was at first, but more defiled and unclean. This is why I seek an advocate so powerful that, after thy Son, there is none so mighty and august in all creation. There are Apostles, patriarchs, prophets, martyrs, confessors and virgins, excellent protectors, whose help I implore; but thou, my Queen, art better and greater than all these intercessors. For thou art the Queen of Heaven and earth, of men and angels; what they can accomplish with thee, thou canst effect without them. And this because thou art the Mother of God and the Spouse of the Holy Ghost. To thee I have recourse, thy aid I seek in all trials and difficulties. If thou art silent, none will speak for me. If thou prayest, all will pray with thee. For we know, O God, that Mary enjoys such favor with Thee that her wish can never fail

of being accomplished. Our salvation is therefore in her hands." [1]

The *Salve* terminates with the beautiful words expressed by St. Bernard: "O clement, O pious, O sweet Virgin Mary," words we shall now briefly consider. We call Mary "clement" because she is full of pity and compassion and mercy. Her Son is the God of mercy, it is true, but He is also the God of justice, "appointed judge of the living and the dead." But Mary is His Mother, to whom He has given power to distribute the treasures of mercy without restraint. She has merited this of her Son by her sufferings and her love. It is His will that she should ask for pity and mercy for those for whom He suffered on Calvary. With reason, then, did St. Bernard cry in his well-known *Memorare:* "Who is there that ever asked help from thee, O Mary, and was abandoned by thee?"

The next word is "O pious," or, as some people have it, "O loving." We like the first word better than the second, as more expressive of Mary's tenderness and affection for us' as well as her ardent love for her Creator. The Latin poet of Mantua called his hero pious, because of his pity and compassion for his aged father, whom he carried on his shoulder from the burning city of Troy. Mary was pious towards her parents, towards her heavenly Father and her adorable Son, and she is to-day pious to all her adopted children who invoke her aid. Mary

[1] Oration x.: VI Ad Mariam.

is also our "sweet" Mother; sweet, because she not only attracts us to her by her virginal beauty, but she holds our hearts in thrall by the sanctity of her love. O sweet Mother, may we never sadden thy immaculate heart by committing sin and thus offending thy adorable Son Jesus!

In the early annals of the Order of St. Dominic a pathetic account is given of the singing of the *Salve* in days of bitter persecution. The tale is briefly found in the Dominican Breviary, in the feast of Blessed Sadoc, which occurs on the second of June. Sadoc, with a few companions, was sent by St. Dominic to evangelize Hungary. In his journey there on foot, Sadoc collected a number of disciples whom he intended to employ on his missions. Having traversed Hungary, he entered Poland, most of which had already been converted by the preaching of the great apostle and son of St. Dominic, St. Hyacinth. Having arrived at Sandomir with his disciples, Sadoc built for them a monastery, in order to train them in the religious life and in the spirit of their holy founder. One night, after chanting Matins, the community was surprised to hear the novice who was reading the martyrology announce for the morrow the feast of Blessed Sadoc and his forty-nine companions, martyrs. Sadoc, hearing the announcement, reprimanded the novice, saying, "The choir is no place to create laughter." Thereupon the novice presented the martyrology to his superior, showing

him the golden letters which were there imprinted. Sadoc, realizing what was ordained for him and his brethren, told them to prepare for martyrdom. The following evening, whilst they were chanting the *Salve*, the doors of the convent were suddenly broken in, and a savage band of Tartars murdered the prior and the whole community.

During the French Reign of Terror, when the streets of Paris ran with the best blood of France and the guillotine was constantly employed in beheading the purest and noblest of her citizens, the sentence of death was passed against a whole community of Carmelite nuns. The dismal cart halted at their gates to convey them to the place of execution. Bravely the Sisters stepped into it, intoning the *Salve Regina*. They sang it whilst passing through the streets; they sang it at the place of execution; they sang it whilst one after the other placed her head under the murderous axe, and only after the last of the heroic band had offered her neck to the executioner did the chanting cease. With the soul of the murdered prioress, the last strains of the *Salve Regina* ascended to heaven. The infuriated rabble had listened terror-stricken to this chant. They did not laugh; they did not clap their hands as was their custom on such occasions. As if aroused from their stupefying intoxication, they listened to the song of the dying virgins. Their diabolical shouts had ceased. The revolution passed its zenith with

the *Salve Regina* of the Parisian Carmelite nuns.

Another pathetic scene was presented, a few years ago, on board the ill-fated French steamship, "La Bourgogne." Father Kessler, of New York City, and four Dominicans were on board. When it was evident that the vessel was doomed to perish, having ministered to the spiritual necessities of their fellow-passengers, the four Dominicans began to chant their favorite hymn, the *Salve*, and continued it till they all sank beneath the waves.

In reading these incidents in the closing scenes of the lives of God's servants, we may wonder why they so clung to, why they so confidingly chanted, the simple *Salve*. But our wonder ceases on the reflection that they had the Church as their guide. She it was, by her example and command, that filled their young souls with a love for it, to be afterwards strengthened by their own personal knowledge of its efficacy. And then, when the solemn moment of death came, it welled up from their hearts and crossed their lips with a confidence born of this knowledge. So may it be with us. We know its history and we know its power. Let us accustom ourselves to its daily use; and then, when our hour comes to meet our God, it will likewise ascend from our tongues and hearts, to be heard and answered by our beloved Queen of the *Salve*.

INDULGENCES

In the preface of his learned work on Indulgences, Father Lepicier, O. S. M., says: "Indulgences are an abiding pledge of the love of God for man, and of the love of man to God and his neighbor." [1] By His death Jesus purchased for us all graces and gave to St. Peter and his successors the keys of His treasury, declaring, "Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, it shall be bound also in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose upon earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven." [2] By the authority signified by these keys, which were not of brass, or silver, or gold, power was given the Church to remove whatever obstacles would prevent the soul from entering heaven. She was enabled by her Sacraments not only to take away sin, with all its corruption and defilement, and to restore the soul to life, but was also empowered to take away the debt due divine justice, which might remain even after sin had been pardoned. "The tree of life in Paradise," says Lepicier, "was no longer accessible, but he (God) would have another tree not planted in Paradise, but the presence of which would make the earth a

[1] Preface ix. [2] Matt. xvi. 19.

paradise, bearing fruit. Not one fruit only, but two delicious fruits: the one destined to give life to the soul, the other to give relief to the body: the one intended to cure the eternal death, the other to be a remedy against the temporal penalty that ensued therefrom."[1] Further on he says: "When a man offends God wilfully, his soul contracts a two-fold guilt in His sight: the one is a guilt of stain by which it becomes defiled, loathsome, an object of disgust, of execration and abomination in the sight of Him whom she has offended: the other is a guilt of debt, to be paid to the justice of God. For by offending Him man indulged his own self at the expense of the Divine Lord, he deprived his Maker of that allegiance which, as a servant, he was bound to give Him; and that act of flagrant injustice constitutes a real debt towards God to be atoned for by punishment either self-imposed or coming from without."[2] Hence divine justice says, by the Apocalypse: "As much as she hath glorified herself and lived in delicacies, so much torment and sorrow give you to her."[3]

In the tribunal of confession, after the penitent makes his self-accusation, the priest imposes on him what is called a penance—certain prayers to be said or certain good acts to be performed. This penance is intended to satisfy in some measure the justice of God offended by the sins confessed. But we have reason to fear that

[1] Lepicier, p. 3. [2] Lepicier, p. 4. [3] Apoc. xviii. 7.

these slight penances are far from being adequate to satisfy God for the many blasphemies and other sins which have been confessed. When the priest has reason to fear that the penances he gives are not adequate, why, it may be asked, does he not impose heavier penances—long fasts on bread and water, such as were imposed by the Church in early ages, and known as canonical penances? The answer is, that no priest can give adequate penance, since only God knows the malice and enormity of sin. Again, we fear that many would be unwilling to perform to-day those rigorous penances that were in early days imposed by the Church. Yet, while she changes her discipline, her doctrine does not change. As a loving mother, she now opens to us the infinite treasure of her indulgences, begging us through them to satisfy the justice of God for our transgressions. Would to God that all poor sinners realized the tender solicitude of the Church, and the necessity and advantages of the spiritual riches she offers for our acceptance!

It is not the purpose of the writer to present lengthy proofs of the existence of purgatory. These can be found in our books of controversy. We know it exists—Scripture, history, tradition, the faith and practice of the Jewish people, of all Eastern Christians from the dawn of Christianity to the present, the teaching of the Church, and, finally, reason, convince us that there must be a purgatory. And from our hearts

we thank God for its existence. We know that "There shall not enter into Heaven anything defiled," [1] and we have reason to fear that few (outside of sinless infancy) die free from the defilement of sin. Few at their death can say with the dying St. Dominic: "I thank God that, through His grace, I never lost my baptismal purity." We have all to fear that prison of which Jesus spoke when He said: "Amen, I say to thee thou shalt not go out from thence until thou repay the last farthing." [2]

Believing in the existence of purgatory, and fearing that the vast majority of the adult faithful will be compelled to enter that purifying state, let us now consider some of its principal torments. St. John Chrysostom tells us that our material fire is but a shadow, a painting, of the fire of hell. St. Thomas does not hesitate to say that the fire of purgatory is of the same nature, of the same activity, as the fire of hell. St. Cyril, Bishop of Jerusalem, who lived in the first ages of the Church, held the same view, maintaining that the only essential difference between the fire of hell and that of purgatory is that the former will last forever, whilst the latter will come to an end. We all know how keen and penetrating our material fire is, and how we dread its frightful torture.[3] Lately, in Texas, a wrecked train was being consumed by fire. The poor engineer, caught

[1] Apoc. xxi. 27. [2] Matt. v. 26.
[3] See "Pleadings for Holy Souls," p. 35.

in the burning wreck, could not be extricated. He implored the bystanders to blow out his brains or strike him on the head with an axe to deliver him from his horrible sufferings. Superhuman efforts are often made to release those imperiled in burning buildings; our hearts are filled with grief and horror when we hear that several of our fellow creatures have been burned to death. Whole nations are moved with sympathy and compassion upon learning of the destitute condition of sufferers from great calamities, and willingly hasten to relieve their necessities. Yet, although our faith teaches us that the inhabitants of that vast "kingdom of Mary," as Father Faber calls it, are in frightful suffering day and night, we are little moved to hasten to their assistance!

Some ask: How can a material fire affect spiritual substances, such as the souls of those condemned to purgatory? We know not the nature of that fire, nor can we understand how our souls, which are spiritual, are affected by pains of the body, since the body without the soul is immune from suffering; or how the rich man mentioned in St. Luke's [1] Gospel suffered the frightful thirst spoken of by Our Lord.

This we know, that with God all things are possible; that this fire is created to satisfy offended justice, and that, having grievously offended Him by our trangressions, we must expect to experience the punishment meted out

[1] Luke xvi. 24.

by that justice, unless we satisfy it by gaining indulgences.

Another frightful suffering experienced by the prisoners in purgatory and one which, according to holy writers, exceeds in intensity all others, is the pain of loss. They are deprived of the sight of that adorable Being, the source of all good, to whom their souls are intensely aspiring. They are drawn to Him, who is their all, yet repelled because of their defilement. This pain we cannot fathom or conceive, because it is beyond our comprehension. If even in this life devout souls are yearning to behold the face of God; if St. Paul longed to be dissolved to be with Christ; if David cried out, "When shall I come and appear before the face of God?"[1] what must be the burning desire of those holy disembodied souls to behold and to be with their God and their all! Surely, even if we have no pity and compassion for our fellow beings, our own desire to see the face of our God immediately after death should determine us to do all in our power to shorten the time of our imprisonment by gaining all possible indulgences. But we are bound to love our neighbor as ourselves, and since those poor souls now in purgatory are members of Christ's mystical body, our clear duty is to aid them to possess the object of their ardent desire. St. John says: "He that shall see his brother in need and shall shut up his bowels from him, how doth the

[1] Ps. xli. 3.

charity of God abide in him?"[1] St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Corinthians, says: "If one member suffer anything, all the members suffer with it."[2] And as charity is said to begin at home, we should especially be mindful of those near and dear to us—of those bound to us by ties of blood, of gratitude, and of friendship. By gaining indulgences in their behalf we will give an immeasurably greater proof of our loving remembrance than by erecting rich monuments to their memory. And these holy souls, becoming our beneficiaries, full of gratitude, will plead for us when we in turn shall stand in need of the help of our friends.

[1] I John iii. 17. [2] I Cor. xii. 26.

CONFRATERNITY OF THE ROSARY

THE Confraternity of the Rosary is the oldest confraternity existing in the Church, and probably none is more widely spread and enriched with so many privileges and indulgences. It is under the special protection of the Blessed Virgin, since, as Catholic tradition tells us, it was erected under her inspiration. The fulfilment of the obligation it imposes secures a number of prayers being said by each member, and brings to his mind the principal mysteries of our Faith. These members share in each others' prayers and good works, and also participate in the merits, Masses and good works of the whole Order of St. Dominic, to which they are affiliated; and this not only during their life, but also after their death.

Numerous indulgences, both plenary and partial, are granted to the Confraternity. The conditions for gaining these indulgences are as follows: To have the beads blessed by a Dominican or by any other priest who has power to impart the Dominican indulgences; to have the full name recorded in a register where the Confraternity is canonically erected, and to comply

with the duty of membership, which is to recite, with meditation, the fifteen mysteries each week. These may be said at one time, or may be divided into two or more mysteries at a time. Any pastor may, with the consent of his bishop, have the Confraternity erected in his church, procuring for this purpose a diploma from the Master General of the Dominicans. These diplomas may be obtained from the Director of the Rosary, 869 Lexington Ave., New York City. Any priest may obtain faculties to bless beads and impart the Dominican indulgence by applying to the same Director.

Together with the indulgences of the Rosary, all of which are applicable to the faithful departed, there are many other devotions richly indulgenced, such as the Stations of the Cross, the Beads of St. Bridget, Crozier Beads, and many beautiful indulgenced ejaculations, most of which may be applied to the poor sufferers in purgatory. Rosary beads may also be enriched with the Crozier and the Brigittine indulgences. All priests may obtain, through their bishops, the power to give them.

The following indulgences may be gained every day by any one who is a member of the Rosary Confraternity, and who uses beads blessed by a Dominican or by one having faculties from the Dominican Master General.[1]

1. An indulgence of 100 days for every Our

[1] This summary was prepared from the official list of Leo XIII. by Father Massi, S.J.

Father and Hail Mary, which makes 5500 days in all (100×55=5500).

2. Besides, for pronouncing devoutly the holy name of Jesus in each Hail Mary, the Rosarian gains 5 years and 5 quarantines, that is to say, 1825+200, or 2025, days of indulgence (1825+200=22,025) which, multiplied again by the number of Hail Marys, viz., 50, makes 101,250 days of indulgence (2025×50=101,250), (Pius IX., Decr. S. C. Indulg., Apr. 14, 1856); so that he gains in each pair of beads 5500 days for reciting it; 101,250 for pronouncing devoutly the Holy Name, in all 106,750 days.

3. There is another indulgence of 5 years and 5 quarantines, common also to all the faithful, that is, 2025 days (1825+200=2025), each time for saying a third part of the Rosary (see Raccolta, 194 Edit. 1898), which added to the above of 106,750, makes 108,775 (2025+106,750 =108,775).

4. Again, an indulgence of 300 days for saying a third part of the Rosary granted by Leo XIII., April 29, 1899, makes in all the sum of 109,075 (300+108,775=109,075). All these indulgences are gained by saying a single pair of the beads.

5. Moreover a person enrolled in the Rosary Confraternity and carrying with him, even without saying them, a pair of beads blessed by a Dominican, or by an authorized priest, gains 100 years and 100 quarantines of indulgences daily (Pius X., 31 July, 1906) which makes 36,500

days (100×365=36,500) and the 4000 for the quarantines, makes 40,500 in all (36,500+4000 =40,500) which, added to the above quantity, makes the total of 149,575=409 years and 310 days of indulgence, which every one may gain in ten or fifteen minutes.

The only condition for a Rosarian is to say every week the whole Rosary of fifteen decades, which can be said in three days; so that by saying a third part of the Rosary every day one complies with this condition.

6. Pius X., June 12, 1907, granted the following privilege, namely, that in one and the same recitation the Crozier and the Dominican indulgence can be gained, provided the Rosary has both blessings.

According to this concession a Rosarian may gain by saying a single pair of beads the sum of 177,075, that is, 149,575, the Dominican indulgence, +27,500 of the Crozier (149,575+ 27,500=177,075=485 years, 50 days of indulgence).

SUMMARY OF INDULGENCES OF DOMINICAN BEADS

For saying the beads	5,500
For pronouncing devoutly the Holy Name of Jesus	101,250
For saying a third part of the Rosary, each time	2,025
Again for a third part of the Rosary	300
For carrying the beads	40,500
Total (409 years and 310 days of indulgences)	149,575
Plus Crozier indulgence	27,500
	177,075

(485 years and 50 days of Indulgences.)

Plenary Indulgences

The members of the Rosary may also gain many plenary indulgences on the usual conditions. We shall here mention a few: One on the day of reception into the Rosary Confraternity; on the same day another may be gained by saying in the Confraternity Church five decades of the beads, together with some prayers for the Pope's intention; a plenary indulgence on each of the great feasts of Our Lord and of our Blessed Lady, also one on the principal feast of each canonized Dominican saint. Three plenary indulgences may be gained on each first Sunday of the month: (1) by going to Communion in the Confraternity Church, (2) by attending the procession, (3) by uniting in saying the Rosary after the procession. On Great Rosary Sunday a plenary indulgence may be gained from first vespers of the feast (about 2.30 Saturday P.M., until Sunday at sunset) for each visit made by any of the faithful. This is know as Portiuncula or "Toties Quoties" Indulgence. For gaining each of these indulgences, prayers, at least five Our Fathers and five Hail Marys, should be said for the Pope's intentions at each visit. The visits must be distinct, i.e., one must leave the church after each visit.

For a full list of plenary and partial indulgences granted to the Dominican Rosary, see "The Rosary, the Crown of Mary" for sale in our Catholic bookstores.

Date Due

NOV 2			
SEP 13			

ST. ALBERT'S COLLEGE LIBRARY

8149 232.931.9
McK25

McKenna, Rev. Charles H.
AUTHOR
The Treasures of the Rosary
TITLE

cK25

McKenna P40.41
036-37